Men-at-Arms

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Armies of Castile and Aragon 1370–1516

John M.D. Pohl PhD • Illustrated by Gerry Embleton

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Series editor Martin Windrow

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Late Medieval European history focuses on the Hundred Years' War in France, followed by England's Wars of the Roses and the Swiss wars against Burgundy and the Empire. Attention shifts to Spain only after 1492, with the fall of Granada and the first explorations and conquests in the Americas. This may leave the reader with a sense of astonishment that, seemingly from nowhere, the 'Catholic Monarchs' Fernando and Isabel were able to lay the foundation for the world's first global empire.

This study explores the roots of this remarkable achievement. Beginning with the assassination of Pedro I of Castile by his half-brother Enrique of Trastámara in 1369, it examines how this usurper and his heirs went on to consolidate the power of the Trastámara dynasty, and to dominate the western Mediterranean for the next century and a half.

Iberian rivalries

Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries the Iberian peninsula was fragmented into numerous independent political entities with different languages, customs and histories. Among these, four powerful kingdoms were militarily predominant, of which Castile and Aragon were the largest in territorial extent.

Castile, united with León, constituted much of what is today the nation of Spain. It was bordered by Navarre to the north, Aragon to the east, Granada to the south and Portugal to the west, and drew much of its wealth from the central area of the peninsula. Aragon, united with Catalonia, had greater access to the Mediterranean, and had expanded into the Catalán region of southern France as well as the islands of Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily.

Consequently there were two major arteries along which wealth flowed into the peninsula. One, centred in Barcelona and controlled by Aragon, drew on the western Mediterranean; the other, extending overland from Madrid to Seville, connected the Christian north of Castile to the

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The King of Aragon presides over the *Cortes* or royal council of Catalonia. By the 14th century the re-emergence of cities such as Valencia and Barcelona had empowered a new, wealthy merchant class known as the *burguesía*. Kings were compelled to admit them into their courts in order to secure financing for their wars, in return for *fueros* or grants of autonomy to the cities. This effectively gave the bourgeoisie the power to either approve or veto a military campaign, so war became an extension of the mercantile endeavours of the state. Just as the merchants invested in the kings' wars, so the kings invested in the merchants' expeditions. (Author's collection)

Islamic south of Granada, with its access to North Africa and the Levant. Traditionally, Mediterranean luxuries such as silk and spices, as well as finished goods in leather and iron, were imported and traded for agricultural products. However, by 1300 Castile had opened new markets in northern Europe via the Bay of Biscay, exchanging Mediterranean commodities for high-quality textiles manufactured in the Low Countries.

Both taxation and personal investment in these economic corridors made Iberian nobles among the wealthiest men and women in Europe, and they reinvested their profits to finance military campaigns that further expanded their tributary domains – even at the expense of devastating conflicts over succession that might ruin their families. By the 1360s, following the conclusion of the first phase of the Hundred Years' War with Edward III's victory at Poitiers in 1356, northern European nobles were also beginning to see opportunities for their own enrichment in these Iberian family conflicts.

CHRONOLOGY

1350	Death of Alfonso XI, King of Castile, who is succeeded by his son Pedro I ('the Cruel').
1356	Pedro I of Castile begins more than ten years of nearly continuous conflict with King Pedro IV of Aragon, who supports Enrique de Trastámara, Pedro's illegitimate older half-brother and pretender to the throne of Castile.
1366	Enrique invades Castile with French help, and is crowned; Pedro withdraws to Portugal.
1367	Battle of Nájera/Navarrette (3 April); Pedro's allied English army led by the 'Black Prince' defeats Enrique's army and French allies led by Bertrand du Guesclin.
1369	Pedro I is defeated at battle of Monteil (23 March), and assassinated by Enrique, who is proclaimed King Enrique II of Castile. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, marries Constanza, Pedro's daughter and heiress (1371).
1375	Enrique II's son Juan marries Leonor, daughter of Pedro IV of Aragon.
1379	Enrique II dies; his son inherits Castile as King Juan I.
1383	After Leonor's death Juan I of Castile marries Beatriz, daughter of King Fernando I of Portugal. When her father dies, Juan claims Portuguese throne as king-consort, but Portuguese nobles instead proclaim João, Master of Avis, as king.

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1385	Juan I of Castile invades Portugal, but is defeated by King João at battle of Aljubarrota (14 August).
1386–87	John of Gaunt allies himself with King João, leading an English army to Spain to claim Castile as king-consort with his wife Constanza; his campaign fails, but he concludes a further marriage-alliance between the Plantagenet and Trastámara families.
1390	Juan I of Castile dies; he is succeeded by his son Enrique III.
1402	Castile initiates conquest of the Canary Islands.
1404–06	Castilian commander Pero Niño leads naval expeditions against North Africa and England.
1406	Enrique III of Castile dies; his brother Fernando is offered the crown, but chooses to serve as co-regent with Catherine of Lancaster during the minority of her and Enrique's son, Juan II.
1410	Fernando subjugates Moorish city of Antequera. His campaign against Granada is interrupted when King Martin of Aragon, son of Pedro IV, dies without an heir.
1412	Fernando I accepts the crown of Aragon, and administers it together with Castile.
1416	Fernando I dies; he is succeeded by his eldest son Alfonso V ('the Magnanimous'), head of the Trastámara dynasty.
1420	Alfonso embarks on expedition to reclaim Corsica and defend Sardinia from the Genoese.
1421	Queen Giovanna II of Naples adopts Alfonso as heir to that kingdom to counter the claims of Duke Louis III of Anjou.
1422	Alfonso occupies Naples, but, betrayed by Giovanna, later withdraws, leaving an occupying force in Castel Nuovo.
1423	Alfonso sacks Marseille, then returns to Aragon to settle territorial disputes with Castile.
1432	Alfonso returns to Naples and campaigns throughout central and southern Italy.
1434	Duke Louis III of Anjou dies; his brother René inherits his claim to Naples.
1435	Queen Giovanna II of Naples dies. Alfonso besieges nearby Gaeta, but is captured by Genoese at sea battle of Ponza (5 August).
1436	Alfonso convinces Fillippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, to free him, and they conclude an alliance to counter René of Anjou's claim to Naples.
1438	René of Anjou takes personal command of Franco-Italian army in Italy.
1441–42	Alfonso besieges and captures Naples; René of Anjou withdraws to Provence.
1443	Alfonso stages triumphal entry into Naples (26 February).
1445	Factional disputes between Castile and Aragon spark

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Marble relief of Alfonso V depicting him as a Roman emperor. The inscription identifies him as *Divus*, 'The Divine' – a remarkably pagan proclamation for a Christian king of this period, recalling as it does the ancient Roman cult of god-emperors. A collector of ancient coins and classical works by Pliny, Virgil and Caesar, Alfonso maintained a large library at his court, as well as a team of research scholars even when he was in the field. He once stopped his men from dismantling a building for catapult stones at the siege of Gaeta when he learned that the ruin had reputedly been the house of Cicero. Although he has been overlooked by some later historians, Alfonso's vision and achievements make him a foremost figure in Late Medieval history, in every way the equal of Henry V of England and Charles the Bold of Burgundy. (Original in Victoria & Albert Museum, London; author's photo)

open conflict. Juan II of Castile and dominant Constable Álvaro de Luna defeat Juan, regent of Aragon, at battle of Olmedo.

1454 Juan II of Castile dies; he is succeeded by his son Enrique IV.

1458 Alfonso V dies; he is succeeded by his son as King Ferdinando I of Naples, and his brother as King Juan II of Aragon.

1469 Isabel, daughter of Juan II of Castile, marries Fernando, son of Juan II of Aragon.

1474 Enrique IV dies; he is succeeded by his half-sister as Queen Isabel I of Castile.

1476 Battle of Toro; army of Isabel and Fernando defeats invasion of Castile by King Alfonso of Portugal with rebellious Castilian nobles.

1479 Juan II of Aragon dies; his son succeeds as Fernando II, thereby uniting the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile through his marriage to Isabel.

1480 René of Anjou dies, leaving his claim on Naples to King Louis XI of France.

1481–92 The 'Catholic Monarchs' Fernando and Isabel pursue campaigns against Moorish Amirate of Granada.

1492 Surrender of Granada brings *Reconquista* to a close (2 January). Sponsored by Isabel and Fernando, Genoese adventurer Columbus crosses Atlantic Ocean to Bahama islands.

1493 Columbus founds first colony on Caribbean island of Hispañola (Haiti/Santo Domingo).

1494 King Ferdinando I of Naples dies; he is succeeded by his son Alfonso II. When King Charles VIII of France invades Italy, Alfonso II abdicates in favour of his own son Ferdinando II, and retreats to Sicily.

1495 Charles VIII occupies Naples; French force under Marshal d'Aubigny defeats Ferdinando II of Naples and Spanish force under Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba at Seminara (28 June). Charles VIII leaves occupying force in Naples and withdraws part of his army to France, en route defeating Italian army led by Giovanni Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua at battle of Fornovo (6 July).

1495–98 Cordóba wages successful hit-and-run campaigns to recapture Neapolitan territory in Calabria.

1501 After death of Ferdinando II of Naples, France and Aragon agree to divide his kingdom between them.

1502 Louis XII of France exploits civil war in Naples to invade Italy. Fernando II of Aragon reinforces Córdoba's army.

1503 Córdoba defeats French at decisive battles of Cerignola (28 April) and the Garigliano river (29 December), forcing Louis XII to relinquish French claims on Naples to Fernando of Aragon.

1504 Queen Isabel I of Castile dies.

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1516	King Fernando II of Aragon dies; his Habsburg grandson Charles of Austria inherits the throne of a unified Spain as King Carlos I.
1519	King Carlos is elected Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, inheriting much of central and southern Europe, and the foundations of a worldwide empire.

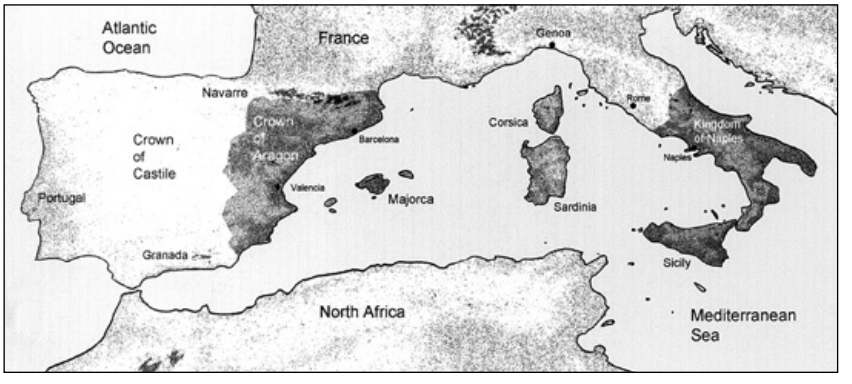
PRELUDE

The reign of Pedro the Cruel, 1350–69

When the 16-year-old Pedro I inherited the throne of his father Alfonso XI in 1350 as King of Castile, León and Galicia, not the least of the challenges he faced was the rival claim by his older illegitimate half-brother Enrique, Count of Trastámara. By 1356 Pedro I was engaged in a war with King Pedro IV of Aragon, who supported Enrique and sought to expand the dominion of Aragon over the Mediterranean in competition with both Castilian and Genoese interests. At first the conflicts were limited, with one side or the other seizing border towns for a time, only to return them at the conclusion of a treaty. However, in 1366 Enrique invaded Castile with a French army commanded by the renowned Bertrand du Guesclin; Pedro withdrew into Portugal with the treasury, and Enrique had himself crowned in the Castilian capital, Burgos.

Seeking allies among the English who occupied Gascony and Aquitaine to the north, Pedro enlisted the aid of Edward, 'Black Prince' of Wales and his brother John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by promising reimbursement of their expenses and a share in the lucrative trade between Castile and the Low Countries. In spring 1367 Prince Edward and the Duke of Lancaster crossed the Pyrenees, and arrived at Nájera some 55 miles east of Burgos. Here they encamped with Pedro to await Enrique and Guesclin, who were marching on them with more than three times their own numbers.

On 3 April the two armies met in battle. After an infantry mêlée the English longbowmen drove their opponents back and established a screen, while Sir John Chandos and the Duke of Lancaster led a vanguard of English knights in a direct charge against the 'battle' of 4,000 French and Aragonese commanded by Guesclin. The Black



Map of the western Mediterranean showing the territories of the Crown of Castile, the Crown of Aragon, and the Kingdom of Naples. (Author's illustration)

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The Death of King Pedro

Enrique and Pedro, clasping,
Hold in straining arms each other;
Tugging hard, and closely grasping,
Brother proves his strength with brother.

Harmless pastime, sport fraternal,
Blends not thus their limbs in strife;
Either aims, with rage infernal,
Naked dagger, sharpened knife.

Now Enrique has the upmost,
Now it's Pedro lies beneath,
In his heart his brother's poniard
Instant finds its bloody sheath.

(Medieval Spanish ballad)

Prince and King Pedro then advanced against Enrique's younger brothers Tello and Sancho; their division immediately broke and fled, enabling the English knights to turn on Enrique's own third division. While the heavy cavalry fought each other, Castilian slingers and English archers shot into their ranks or protected the knights' rallying points. By afternoon Guesclin's division had collapsed, and the French commander surrendered to Chandos and Lancaster; when Enrique's own division began to break, the usurper fled the field. His troops attempted to retreat to the town of Nájera, but many were intercepted and cut down on the banks of the river outside the town walls. After this rout Enrique escaped to Aragon, while King Charles V of France opened negotiations for the ransom of Bertrand du Guesclin.

Pedro I was once more master of Castile; but when he failed to honour his debt to the English, claiming that his treasurers had been robbed by roving mercenaries, the Black Prince withdrew over the Pyrenees. Enrique of Trastámara and Bertrand du Guesclin rebuilt their army, and the following March caught Pedro by surprise and defeated him at Monteil. Surrounded within a nearby castle, the king had no choice but to negotiate. There are varying accounts, but according to the Castilian historian López de Ayala (who had personal knowledge), when Pedro went to Guesclin's tent to try to buy him off the Frenchman turned him over to his half-brother. Enrique immediately drew his dagger, and after a brief struggle Pedro lay dead. Enrique was declared the legitimate heir, and took the throne as the first Trastámara king of Castile.

WEAPONRY & TACTICS

The character of Iberian armies was governed by two main factors: the terrain, and the traditional enemy. Physically, the peninsula is divided by many ranges of mountains and is subject to extreme climatic variations, resulting in noticeable regional differences within the overall material culture. Historically, the many centuries of interaction – both military and commercial – with the Moorish states of Andalusia in the south resulted in considerable cross-influences, of which the most obvious was the popularity of the class of lightly armoured cavalry known as *jinetes*. Vassal or hired Muslim troops were often to be found in 'Christian' armies, and their styles were copied.

Consequently, unlike those contemporary armies which favoured infantry with specific forms of weaponry, such as the English longbowmen or the Swiss pikemen, Spanish armies used diverse combinations that included swords, bows, crossbows, and polearms of various kinds, together with weapons that had disappeared from other European arsenals centuries earlier, such as javelins and slings. In the later Middle Ages shields ranged from the small round buckler or targe to the larger, Moorish-influenced *adarga* of hardened leather, generally in a 'kidney' shape.

For much of the 14th century there was little use of 'white' or plate armour. Depending upon the resources of the wearer, the predominant types of protection were leather items ranging from the simple *jacque* to more highly developed forms, e.g. of shaped, hardened-leather body and limb armour for knights; 'soft armour' – the *gambeson* or

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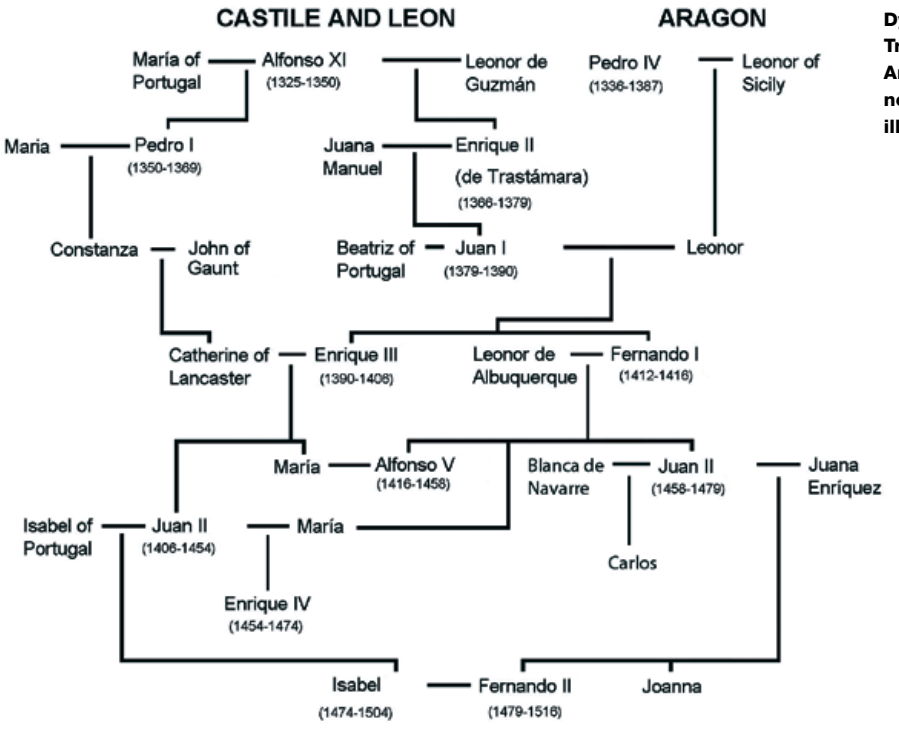

Dynastic genealogy of the Trastámaras in Castile and Aragon. Dates given are regnal, not birth-to-death. (Author's illustration)

aketon padded with hair or layered cloth; a short ringmail *haubergeon*; and both the old-fashioned 'coat-of-plates', and the more evolved *brigandine* with much smaller plates, riveted inside a fabric garment. These were habitually worn in combination – for instance a brigandine, over mail, over 'soft armour' – plus leather or plate limb defences. The preferred helmet was the broad-brimmed 'war hat' *(chapel de fer)* in many variations – e.g. the brim was sometimes curved down, or the skull drawn up into a pointed 'onion' shape. Elites followed French and Italian influences in wearing various forms of 'great helm', and later open or visored *bascinet* helmets. Helmets could be combined with a mail or scale-reinforced *aventail* or more extensive cape-like *camail*, with the choice of other head coverings depending upon the fluctuating extremes of climate.

Heraldic illustration of King Juan II of Castile (r. 1406–54); the arms of the kingdom are (first & third) yellow castle on red ground, (second & fourth) gold-crowned purple lion with red tongue and claws, on white ground. (From *Le Grand Armorial équestre de la Toison d'or*; photo author's collection)

The fact that Spanish commanders neither trained large groups of men in the use of specialized weapons, nor employed tactics specifically associated with those uses, was due in part to the different forms of organization that constituted their armies. These ranged from locally raised militias, dependent on city sponsorship when called upon to join a campaign, to professional soldiers in a nobleman's full-time employ. Another critical factor was that Iberian troops were largely enlisted for disputes over tributary cities and territories lying in rugged frontier regions. Consequently, the emphasis was on quick response, mobility and close-quarter fighting, in which Iberians developed a reputation for tenacity. Versatile light infantry and light cavalry (including mounted crossbowmen) were more suited to mobile campaigns of raiding and ambush than northern European-style heavily armoured cavalry.

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In the late 14th and 15th centuries, however, French and Italian styles of plate armour were adopted by the elites who then formed the heavy cavalry of Iberian armies, which came to dominate the field of pitched battle as opposed to more wide-ranging campaigns. As to helmets, by the mid-15th century the sallet *(celata)* was being adopted, often in combination with *bevor* throat-armour, as well as the Italian-style *barbuta*. By late in that century extensive plate armour was being worn by heavy infantry for foot combat using polearms, and the sallet was developing into the typical Spanish *cabacete*.

During the battlefield primacy of the heavy mounted knight, squadrons of about 50 men, called *cuadrillas*, were assembled into large tactical groupings called *batallas* under the direct command of the king and his constable. The intent was to overwhelm the enemy by the sheer shock of the entire force at the gallop; this was generally followed by a mêlée during which the less well-equipped men-at-arms rallied to the pennons of their knights. The mounted men fought amongst each other in small groups until the knights either slew or captured their ranking opponents, or both sides were simply so overcome by exhaustion that they were forced to break off the engagement. Meanwhile, *jinetes* carried out manoeuvres on the flanks.

Pedro the Cruel's alliance with the English in the 1360s introduced a new approach to Spanish pitched battles, with greater emphasis on infantry and dismounted men-at-arms. The Prince of Wales's use of his longbowmen at Nájera had the same devastating effect on Enrique's army as it had had on the French at Crécy more than 20 years earlier. At Nájera the local knights were reportedly reluctant to fight on foot, and the local infantry were poorly trained and uncoordinated militia armed with crossbows, spears, javelins and slings. It is notable that Enrique's defeat of Pedro at Montiel in 1369 was only achieved after the English had withdrawn, and the usurper could once again deploy the otherwise unstoppable French-style heavy cavalry charge.

Detail from 15th-century *retablo* believed to depict Fernando I, regent of Castile and King of Aragon (r. 1412–16), leading a charge against the Moors (see also larger reproduction on title page). He wears a tabard in the red and yellow bars of Aragon over a brigandine and mail, with complete plate limb defences. Note the large *rondel* protecting his left armpit, the crown set on his 'great bascinet' helmet, and his horse's *chamfron* and heraldic barding. The man-at-arms riding behind him wears one of the varieties of 'war-hat' helmet, with a mail *aventail* and deep *bevor*. (Original in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; photo author's collection)

Campaigns of the late 14th century

The first marriage of Juan I of Castile to Leonor of Aragon produced two sons, Enrique and Fernando. Leonor's death in 1382 left Juan free to marry Beatriz of Portugal, and to lay claim as her consort to the throne of that kingdom as well. Fearing reduction to Castilian vassalage, however, the Portuguese *Cortes* gave the throne to João, Master of Aviz. Juan responded by invading Portugal with 18,000 men, and the two armies met at Aljubarrota, about 50 miles north of Lisbon, on 14 August 1385.

Although João's troops were outnumbered by more than two to one, many were English and Gascon veterans well versed in the tactics that the Plantagenets had used so successfully against the French. They proved once

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again that knights prepared to fight on foot flanked by massed bowmen, drawn up in a fixed position behind a picket of stakes, were virtually invincible by a cavalry-dependent army. The Castilian force suffered ruinous losses, and King Juan was forced to retreat into Castile and renounce all claims to Portugal.

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, then saw an opportunity to press a claim of his own on Castile, since he was married to Pedro the Cruel's daughter Constanza. On 29 July 1386 he landed at La Corunna with an army of 5,000 men and, moving east, quickly captured towns across the province of Galicia. However, this region soon proved to be strategically useless. Lancaster could garrison the castles but could hardly supply them, since he had dismissed his fleet on the coast, and the Castilians dominated the mountainous interior with their light infantry and *jinetes*. By spring 1387 many of his troops, having barely survived the freezing Galician winter, had had enough and began to disband.

Stained-glass window in the Alcazar of Segovia, depicting King Enrique IV of Castile (r. 1454–74); the source is an image from the 15th-century *Geneologie de los Reyes* now in the Royal Library, Madrid. The king is equipped as a *jinete* light cavalryman, with an ornately decorated *chapel-de-fer* helmet. Under his ankle-length sleeveless robe a brigandine is worn over a short-sleeved mail *haubergeon*, and complete plate arm defences. (Author's collection)

Lancaster joined King João in Portugal with his 1,200 remaining men. The plan was to drive a traditional Plantagenet *chevauchée* deep into León, where Lancaster hoped to recruit disaffected Castilians. King Juan had no intention of fighting another Aljubarrota, and wisely resorted to a more traditional form of Iberian warfare to defend his realm: the *razzia* or 'raid'. The mobile Castilian troops would manoeuvre to catch their enemies on the move, reducing their numbers by the use of hit-and-run tactics; when this had taken a sufficient toll, King Juan would offer terms.

By mid-summer these ambush tactics had forced the column to halt at Benavente in León, and before long hundreds of the English began to contract dysentery and plague, including members of Lancaster's close retinue. With reports that a French army was also entering Spain to 'support' the Castilians, João of Portugal proposed to Lancaster that his ally would be wise to settle for the terms that King Juan was proposing. However, Lancaster knew that Juan I was just as suspicious of French ambitions in Spain as of his own, and he therefore offered the Castilian king a marriage alliance between his own daughter, Catherine of Lancaster, and Juan's eldest son Enrique. This not only consolidated the rival factions of the Castilian dynasty under the Trastámaras, but offered Lancaster the hope that what he could not achieve by conquest he might by matrimony.

SEA POWER

Acceding to the Castilian throne in 1390, Juan's son Enrique III sought to promote sea power as a means to expand the political and economic influence of his realm. Both his father and grandfather had been forced to concede much in terms of lands, titles, and revenue to lesser nobles and

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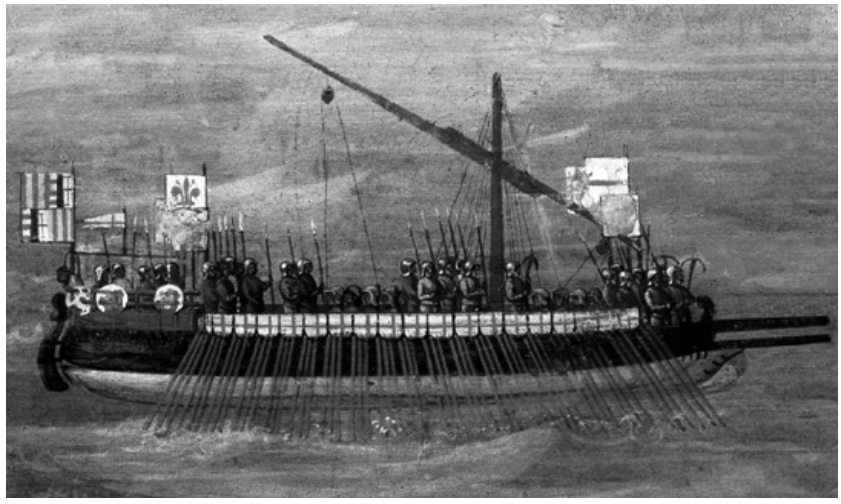
foreign allies to secure Trastámara hegemony, and in so doing they had weakened the central authority of the crown. With populations severely taxed to fund military campaigns that produced little financial return, new sources of revenue had to be found, and the king looked to the sea. At that time much of the Mediterranean was dominated by the republics of Venice and Genoa, although the crown of Aragon-Catalonia, with its ports of Valencia and Barcelona, was emerging as a formidable rival. To the south, Granada continued to maintain its traditional ties with the North African amirates, which gave it access to the rich trading centres of the Levant.

Like King João of Portugal, Enrique now saw potential for expansion beyond the Straits of Gibraltar and down the west coast of Africa. He sponsored the conquest of the Canary Islands in 1402, which brought in considerable income through slave-trading. However, the seas were also plagued by both Christian and Muslim 'free companies' – essentially, pirates who operated outside any legal authority. They not only disrupted commerce, but felt no obligation to pay tribute or taxes to their rightful overlords. In response, in 1404 Enrique commissioned a knight named Pero Niño to organize an expedition to search out a particularly troublesome fleet of Castilian corsairs. Luckily for historians, Niño's lieutenant Díaz de Games left us a fascinating biography of this commander.

The expeditions of Pero Niño

Throughout 1404, Niño used Seville as a base for organizing a fleet of galleys and recruiting crews. His initial expeditions along the coasts of Granada, Sardinia, Corsica and Provence not only failed to locate the pirate fleet, but left him ensnared in a number of political disputes between the 'anti-pope' Benedict XIII in Marseille and the crown of Aragon. Since he was an official representative of the Castilian crown these disputes threatened to have severe consequences, so Niño turned his attention to Algeria and Tunisia. There he engaged in a series of raids against ports that brought him considerable profit in slaves and commercial goods.

In 1405, King Charles VI of France asked Enrique III for naval assistance with a renewed campaign against the English. The latter were wary of the Castilians, however; some 30 years previously they had lost an entire fleet to Castilian ships during a battle off La Rochelle. Niño therefore devised



Mid-to-late 15th-century Aragonese galley, with helmeted men-at-arms visible at the oars and a troop of crossbowmen and spearmen on deck. Some galleys, like this one, were fitted with boarding spurs at the bow, which both broke the enemy's oars and provided a boarding-bridge to his deck. Ramming in order to cripple or even sink an enemy vessel was not the primary objective as it had been in ancient times, but it could still be effective in desperate situations. One of the richest rulers of his day, Alfonso V reinvested the profits from successful campaigns in building galleys and heavy artillery, both of which gave his armies significant new operational capabilities. (Detail from Tavola Strozzi, San Martino Museum, Naples; photo author's collection)

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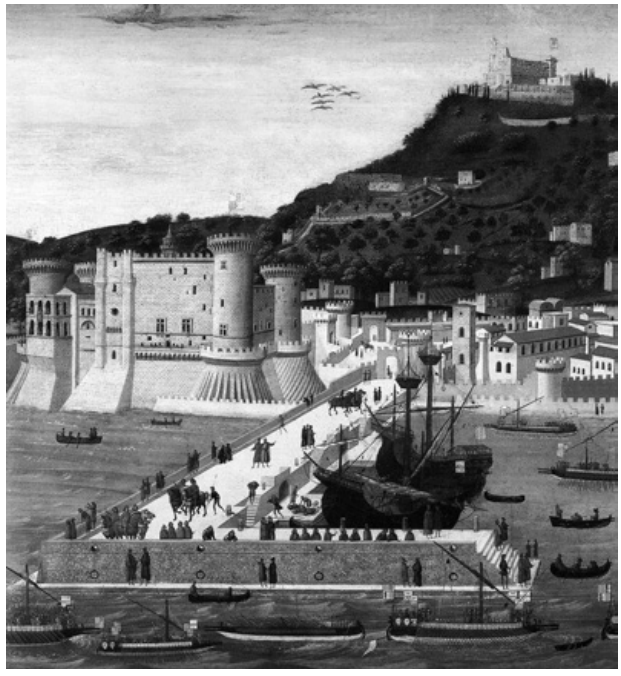
raiding tactics that would force the English to divert their resources from France to the defence of their own country. Commanding three galleys with 40 ships following in support, Niño attacked the southern coast of England. Landings were made at St Ives, Dartmouth, Plymouth, Portsmouth, the isle of Portland, Poole and Southampton, where towns were systematically attacked, pillaged and burned; livestock was seized, and any ships found in port were turned over to the French. Eventually the Castilians came within sight of London itself, but by then it was apparent that the entire coastline was on alert; the galleys repeatedly came under fire from shore artillery, and the landing parties found themselves confronted by large numbers of archers and men-at-arms.

Despite their advantages, galleys were largely dependent on optimal weather conditions. In 1406, Niño was cruising off the north coast of England when he encountered an English fleet and engaged them in open battle. His more manoeuvrable galleys gave him the upper hand until heavy winds blew up, enabling numbers of English *ballingers* (handy small craft, like whaleboats) to close on Niño's galley and blockade it. He was nearly captured before two French ships arrived and drove off the English craft.



Detail from an oil painting on wood depicting an Aragonese fleet arriving in the harbour of Naples, *c.*1450–70. The two ships at the quayside are carracks, with raised 'castles' at bow and stern, and a mixture of 'square rig' on the fore and main masts with a lateen sail on the mizzen mast; note too the crow's-nests for lookouts and bowmen. Evidently these vessels are unloading supplies for the garrison of Castel Nuovo, seen at left. (From the Tavola Strozzi, San Martino Museum, Naples; author's collection)

Ship types

Galleys like those used by Pero Niño could only be deployed if they were accompanied by a fleet of supply ships, including the *cocha*, a Mediterranean version of the northern European *cog*. However, King Enrique's sponsorship of voyages beyond the Straits of Gibraltar soon led Castilian shipwrights to develop a larger and more versatile craft, the *carraca*. This carrack could stand up to the treacherous seas of the open Atlantic, and with a capacity of around 500 tons it held enough cargo and men to make long-distance trading and military expeditions feasible. Approximately 75ft long with a broad 25ft beam, it had a raised 'fore-castle' for defensive purposes, and a 'stern castle' provided an offensive firing platform and the main command position. The carrack had four masts: bowsprit mast, foremast, main mast and mizzen mast. The mizzen mast was rigged with a lanteen sail, to facilitate steering in conjunction with the tiller that was enclosed under the stern castle and attached to a stern-hung rudder.

A second innovation was the *caravela* (caravel), a smaller vessel influenced by Muslim coastal trading ships. Caravels were rigged with lanteen sails that gave them considerable speed and the ability to sail close to the wind. With a capacity of between 30 and 50 tons, they were frequently deployed as escort ships for the carracks and supply vessels for the galleys. Pero Niño's biography also refers to a fourth ship type, the *brigantino*. These could be fitted with sails, oars or a combination of both; they were used to accompany the galleys as tenders, or even as landing craft to ferry men-at-arms from the carracks or caravels. During Niño's North African cruise they were used to tow galleys that ran aground or were damaged.

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By the 1420s Castile had become a formidable sea power, whose technical innovations were matched by a development of tactics that allowed commanders to coordinate military operations. For the first time, ships allowed the Castilians to attack foreign territory on their own terms; they provided a mobile base of operations, making it impossible for an enemy to determine where or when they might attack and therefore to deploy his own troops for any concentrated resistance. The carracks could carry sufficient supplies to keep an army in the field for months or, with access to a nearby allied port, even years at a time.

This was a significant new operational capability, especially when placed in the hands of men like Pere Niño, whose determination and sense of destiny are revealed by Díaz de Games's biography. To a Castilian commander like Niño, God both bestowed on him desires, and assured him of the divine aid necessary to transcend the obstacles that he encountered. It is remarkable how closely this philosophy anticipates the writings of New World *conquistadors* such as Cortés and Bernal Diaz more than a century later.

A 15th-century illustration from the *Chronicles* of Froissart depicting a sea battle between carracks. Such engagements were vicious affairs fought in the close confines of ships' decks by men in fear of being burned alive or drowning in their armour. Combat opened with flights of arrows, and as the range closed crossbowmen and gunners raked the opponent's deck. Lances were used to shove hapless enemies overboard, and to harass those who attempted to cut the ropes of grappling hooks. Once the ships came together, boarders clambered across onto the enemy's deck to hack away with swords and axes, while bowmen continued to shoot downward from the fore- and stern castles and the crow's-nests. (Author's collection)

CAMPAIGNS OF FERNANDO I & ALFONSO V

1407–10: Fernando's campaigns against Granada

The expansion of Castile's overseas trading and the successes of its military caused unease in Muslim Granada. When the Amir Muhammed VII seized the castle at Ayamonte in south-western Spain, Enrique III initiated a campaign directed at the amirate's ultimate conquest, but the Castilian king died in 1406. The throne was offered to his brother Fernando, but the latter – an astute politician as well as an accomplished soldier – saw advantages in honouring Enrique's will and safeguarding the transfer of the throne to Enrique's infant son Juan II. Fernando therefore consented to serve as co-regent with Juan's mother, Catherine of Lancaster, and took personal command of the campaign against Granada. With the prospect of rich prizes if he should succeed in conquering the amirate, the Castilian *Cortes* granted the funds to raise a fleet of more than 30 galleys to cut Granada's supply route from North Africa, and to assemble an invasion force of some 5,500 cavalry and 50,000 infantry together with gunners and engineers.

Attacking in 1407, Fernando succeeded in recapturing Ayamonte and took a string of other towns extending across south-western coastal Spain, but dissent among his knights and commanders obliged him to lift the siege of Sentenil and withdraw to Seville. An uneasy truce was maintained

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until the spring of 1410, when Fernando laid siege to Antequera. Surrounding the town with five main encampments, he drove off the relief forces sent by Amir Yusuf III from the city of Granada, and committed his army to a prolonged series of assaults. Using siege towers and heavy artillery, he battered away at the walls for five months until the city's defences collapsed on 16 September 1410.

Fernando's accession to the throne of Aragon

By this time the King of Aragon had died without a surviving heir, and, as the grandson of King Pedro IV, Fernando was under consideration as a successor to the throne. Recognizing the potential in unifying Aragon and Castile as king of one and regent of the other, Fernando suspended his campaign against Granada and moved north, where fighting was breaking out between political factions that supported other contenders, including the Aragonese Count of Urgel and the French Duke of Anjou. When Fernando triumphed at the battle of Morvedre in 1412, the 'anti-Pope' Benedict intervened with the *Cortes* of Aragon, who reached a compromise and pronounced the Castilian regent King Fernando I.

Upon his accession, Fernando was confronted with deep divisions within the quarrelsome and rivalrous nobilities of both kingdoms, and he spent the last four years of his life attempting to consolidate the power of the Trastámara dynasty over the Iberian peninsula. On Fernando's death the nephew of the 'anti-Pope', Álvaro de Luna, began to exert influence over the young King Juan II of Castile, at first simply as a court companion but later as Constable of Castile and Grand Master of the Military Order of Santiago.

The Kingdom of Aragon, for its part, was almost entirely dependent on Catalonia (which Fernando had administered as Count of Barcelona) for its maritime enterprises. Composed of ranking members of a wealthy merchant class, the Catalonian *Cortes* enjoyed considerable power over the king in terms of lending money, building ships and enlisting crews. While Fernando was concerned with affairs in Castile, the Catalan merchants were in direct competition with the republics of Genoa and Venice, and on any occasion might provide or withhold support for the king's endeavours depending upon the demands of their own.

1421–23: Alfonso V's first Italian campaign

Fernando I of Aragon died on 2 April 1416, and was succeeded on that throne by his eldest son Alfonso V. While Alfonso had earned martial renown in tournaments, his education had focused on politics and diplomacy, and he had played too important a role in his father's administration of both Castile and Aragon to have had much time for exercising military commands.

Aragon was less a kingdom than a confederation. On the Iberian peninsula it included Valencia and the County of Barcelona, together with Catalonia, which then extended across the eastern Pyrenees into southern France. The Aragonese had also either conquered or contracted alliances with the islands of Majorca, Sardinia, Corsica and Sicily. By the beginning of the 15th century Aragon saw itself as an empire composed of primarily maritime states. In 1418 the queen regent of Castile, Catherine of Lancaster, died while King Juan II was still a minor. Alfonso V, in his capacity as head of the Trastámara dynasty, therefore appointed his wife Maria of Castile and his brothers, Juan and Enrique, to oversee the family interests in Aragon and Castile, thus enabling him to deal with overseas threats.

Iron cannon barrel, showing the rings shrunk on to strengthen the forged-stave construction. By the start of the 15th century, small swivelling guns were being mounted on ships' bulwarks, and shortly thereafter larger deck-mounted breech-loading 'culverins' were introduced. Loaded with bullets or handfuls of small stones, the swivel-guns could cut down opponents by the dozen as they massed together on deck to repel boarders.

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The most immediate of these challenges was from the republic of Genoa, the powerful seafaring city-state in north-west Italy. While sending ambassadors to Aragon to negotiate truces and resolve trade disputes, the Genoese were simultaneously maintaining outposts in Sardinia and expanding into Corsica, where they held a strategic castle dominating the harbour of Bonifacio. Alfonso was equally aware that the Genoese supported his French rival Duke Louis III of Anjou, so he began to plan his first major expedition into the Tyrrhenian Sea to secure his interests in that region.

In August 1420, Alfonso had no sooner established himself in Sardinia as a base from which to attack the Corsican castle across the Bonifacio straits when an embassy from Queen Giovanna II of Naples arrived, begging him to come to her assistance. Since she was a widow without an heir, Pope Martin V had declared that Duke Louis of Anjou should succeed to her kingdom upon her death, as the head of a junior line of descent. In order to press his claim, Duke Louis was preparing to move south from Provence and ally himself with the powerful Milanese *condottiere* Muzio Sforza. Alfonso knew that if Louis took possession of the Kingdom of Naples, which comprised nearly the entire southern half of Italy, nothing would stop him from overrunning Sicily as well.

Alfonso left the operation against Bonifacio to a viceroy and sailed to Italy, where Queen Giovanna invested him as her adopted son and heir on 8 July 1421; he then negotiated an alliance with Sforza's rival mercenary general Braccio da Montone. This dramatic venture into a complicated Italian entanglement alarmed the Aragonese, who had expected their king to return to rule his Spanish domains following the Corsican campaign. Alfonso was aware that what appeared to be a windfall in gaining the inheritance of Naples might just as easily become a death trap should any of his allies decide to switch sides, so he wisely fortified himself within the strong Castel Nuovo that dominated the harbour of Naples city while he planned his campaign against Louis of Anjou and Sforza.

His first move was to neutralize Genoa's ability to supply his enemies by sea. Allying himself with the Duke of Milan, Fillippo Maria Visconti, Alfonso directed his fleet into the Ligurian Sea, where it soundly defeated the Genoese fleet and forced the rulers of that republic to surrender to Visconti. However, by November 1422 Louis of Anjou's land forces still controlled so much of the territory surrounding Naples that they threatened to cut off the supplies from Sicily on which the city had become dependent. Alfonso joined Braccio for an attack on the city of Acera, but they had waited too late in the year. The Italo-Aragonese army found itself bogged down in winter mud, dramatically reducing the usefulness of Alfonso's heavy artillery, while Sforza conducted a brutal campaign of harassment in their rear. Fearful that this war would soon spread to involve the entire peninsula, the Pope then proposed terms by which the two sides could disengage with honour intact.

Alfonso remained secure within his Italian domains throughout the following year, but by June 1423 the alliances he had negotiated began to

Map of Italy showing the locations of the principal rival city-states, and of the most important 15th and early 16th-century battles. The foot of the Italian 'boot' is the region of Calabria, then part of the Kingdom of Naples. (Author's illustration)

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dissolve. Increasingly aware that any assurance of his personal safety rested on Queen Giovanna, he began to treat her more as a hostage than a monarch. Giovanna responded by fortifying herself within the city's Castel Capuano, and Alfonso's attempt to force its gate was driven back under a barrage of arrows and stones. Sforza then invaded the city under the pretext of rescuing the queen, and hundreds of Aragonese nobles and their troops fell during vicious fighting in the city's labyrinth of narrow streets. Surrounded, Alfonso retreated into Castel Nuovo to await reinforcement by the Catalonian fleet. Braccio failed to march to his aid, claiming that he could not give up his siege of Alghera, a city loyal to Louis that posed a threat to his rear. When Visconti of Milan learned of Alfonso's predicament, he in turn switched his allegiance to Louis of Anjou; he unleashed the Genoese, who put to sea to seek out the Catalonian fleet.

Contemporary painting of René of Anjou, Count of Provence (1409–80), Alfonso V's rival claimant to the throne of Naples from 1434, and his direct opponent in 1438–42. A veteran of the later campaigns of the Hundred Years' War, René had been a companion of Joan of Arc. Many period images show knights wearing broad-brimmed hats, including straw hats in hot weather. (Author's collection)

Betrayed, outmanoeuvred, and concerned about developments in Castile, Alfonso grudgingly organized a strategic withdrawal from Naples, while leaving his youngest brother Pedro in command of his garrison in Castel Nuovo. He then took his revenge on Duke Louis by sailing north and raiding the Provençal coast, allowing his troops to sack and burn Marseille for three days. When he returned to Barcelona he presented the Marseille harbour chain-boom to the *Cortes* of Catalonia as a trophy.

* * *

Alfonso's first major campaign had secured his domains in Sardinia and Sicily, established a strategic claim on Naples, and repaid his Catalonian backers by sacking their rival Louis of Anjou's richest port. On the other hand, he had underestimated the treacherous complexities of Italian politics. In Alfonso's day few if any individual leaders of Italian states ruled through institutionalized political structures, and in Italy fealty was perceived as just another commodity to be traded. Alfonso held the crown of Aragon by virtue of recognition by the nobility of his right of descent, traced back to Sancho the Great in the 11th century. He stood at the apex of a system of kinship-based ranking, in which all the nobles were invested in order to maintain their own positions within the kingdom. Visconti, on the other hand, was the Duke of Milan only because his father had purchased the title for 100,000 florins. Years later, after Visconti's death, Milan declared itself a republic – until Muzio Sforza's son Francesco, another powerful *condottiere*, threatened the city's senate with lethal force unless they awarded him the title of duke, gratis.

Nevertheless, although Spain was not Italy, upon his return Alfonso became involved in a serious dispute over the inheritance of Antequera with his nephew King Juan II of Castile and Constable Álvaro de Luna, who had become the real power behind the Castilian throne during Alfonso's absence. On several occasions the dispute nearly escalated into battlefield confrontations, and Alfonso was obliged to entrust his Italian interests to his brother Pedro while he remained in Aragon, to

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Castel Nuovo, dominating the harbour of Naples; note the paler stone triumphal arch above the landward gate, added by Alfonso V after his capture of the city in 1442. Construction of the castle had begun in 1279 and continued over 200 years under the patronage of the kingdom's rulers, many of whom used it as their seat of administration. With its five towers rising over 100ft in height, Castel Nuovo was described by contemporary writers as being the strongest fortification in Europe. Its immense strength, and its harbour location allowing resupply from the sea, enabled an Aragonese garrison to withstand a siege (albeit not a very aggressive one) that lasted for 15 years despite the city itself being in enemy hands. (Author's photograph)

administer his domains and develop a plan for his eventual return to Italy. Since he could neither field the numbers of loyal Iberian troops that he would need to sustain an invasion, nor trust Italian allies for more than the short term, he would have to rely on such tactical advantages as the effective defence of Italian castles, and the use of heavy artillery to reduce those of his opponents.

Castles versus cannon

Competition between local noble families had characterized both Spain and Italy since Late Antiquity, and by the 15th century fortified places were to be found everywhere. In Italy, the volatile nature of campaigns was heightened by the practice of autonomous duchies and merchant republics sometimes offering use of their castles to the highest bidder among (essentially mercenary) army commanders, and noblemen's armies competed with one another for the protection of these castles. While a lone castle could become a trap, two or more within easy range could offer mutual support, but army commanders seldom found any particular territory to be under the direction of a single authority. A nobleman's offer of his services in return for the use of one fortification might cause the landlords of others to withhold their support. Any army commander thus had to take account of centuries-old local disputes when dealing with the immediate issue of regional alliance-building to achieve the goal of any particular campaign. This explains much of the 'double dealing' that came to characterize the politics of medieval Spain and Italy.

To counter the dominance of castles, Alfonso V shipped heavy artillery to Italy. Gunpowder artillery had been brought to Europe by the Moors of Andalusia, and the use of cannon is mentioned at the sieges of Seville and Niebla as early as 1248 and 1262 respectively. By the 1320s–40s cannon were in frequent use in Spain, France, Italy and England; they are mentioned aboard ships, and in 1342 the Moors used metal cannonballs against the Castilians at Algeciras. By 1367 the King of Navarre was employing a Moorish artillery-master, and the following year Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy ordered heavy cast guns from a pair of Majorcan brothers.

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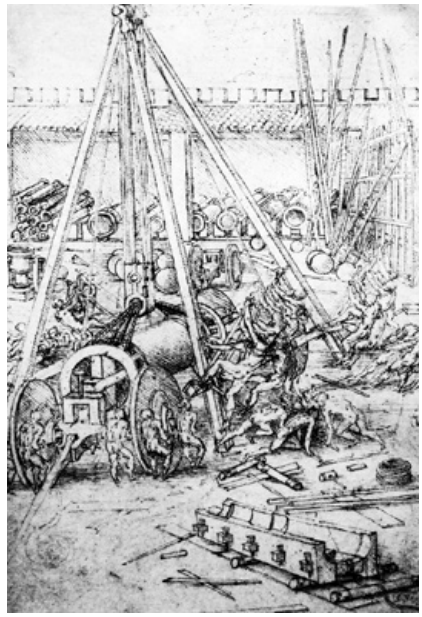
Specialists in the construction and use of cannon could demand rich rewards anywhere in Europe, as those competitive monarchies that could afford the huge cost sought to equip themselves with this latest 'game-changing' technology to negate the defences of castles and fortified towns. By the 1420s the Aragonese were among the armies that could field *bombard* siege-pieces, including some of the heaviest guns yet seen in Europe. These were originally of forged construction: long strips of iron were beaten together edge-to-edge around a cylindrical former, and heated iron rings were then slid on outside, binding the staves more tightly together as they cooled and shrank. The alternative of casting one-piece bronze barrels from molten metal was certainly being attempted by the 1350s; but the art of gun-making advanced by trial and error, and cannon often failed in use, sometimes disastrously so. Interestingly, we read that in 1368 one of the guns cast by Jacques and Roland of Majorca failed its testing, and had to be reinforced by adding external iron rings

Large bombards were made in two separate pieces, with a removable breech chamber, and were transported on wagons. On arrival at their firing positions they had to be unloaded by cranes and emplaced in ditches dug in the ground and pointing at the target, chocked behind with massive wooden blocks to absorb the recoil of firing, and with planks at the sides to limit their movement. By the 1480s the largest Castilian forged-iron bombards seem to have been about 12ft long with a calibre of some 14in, but much smaller cast-bronze bombards are also depicted in mid-15th-century contexts.

The advent of the bombard enabled armies to blast holes in castle walls, weakening them until they collapsed in breaches wide enough to enable massed infantry assaults. But to achieve this took time, as well as an enormous amount of coordinated activity by hundreds of men and draft-animals. Bombards were so heavy that the ox-wagons carrying them were frequently rendered immobile when moving along poor-quality earth roads, especially during wet weather. They took a considerable amount of time to set up, and required the construction of protective timber-and-earth defences for the crews. It might take weeks to batter a practicable breach in a masonry wall, and success or failure was equally dependent on the stubbornness of the besieged. Defenders could hold out for extended periods if they had the rations, the manpower and the stamina to repair the damage inflicted by day, by simply filling the incipient breaches with loose stone and rubble under cover of night. All this time the massed besiegers encamped nearby had to be supplied with food, and the longer a siege lasted the greater became the threat of epidemic disease caused by poor hygiene.

A smaller class of forged-iron cannon, about 3–10ft long with calibres of 2–6in, were termed in Spanish *culebrinas* or culverins, or in French *veuglaires*. Some illustrations show such guns being fired from timber trestle-mounts, and small ones being transported on wheeled carriages; they were not wall-smashers, but were useful for destroying the timber defences that were still in widespread use. In 1385 the Castilians were already described as having 16 'light' cannon at the battle of Aljubarrota. From perhaps the 1430s onwards, more advanced mobile field guns termed *serpentines* began to appear, and these were in common use by the 1470s. Of similar sizes to *veuglaires*, the *serpentines* were mounted on purpose-built



Drawing by Leonardo da Vinci of a massive gun being hoisted onto a transport wagon at a foundry; the scale of the human figures here is unrealistically small for all except a few of the very largest weapons. Nevertheless, forged-iron bombards at least 12ft long and weighing up to 5 tons were fielded; Díaz de Games describes one used by Fernando I at the siege of Antequera as needing 20 pairs of oxen to move it into place. By Alfonso V's time some barrels were being cast from bronze in two-part suspended clay molds, one for the bore being enclosed by another for the exterior. Cast guns were less prone to defects in manufacture and hence did not explode as frequently, but casting without air bubbles and other weakening defects was a demanding science, and only the richest rulers could afford siege trains. (Author's collection)

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two-wheeled carriages, often with arc-and-pin elevating mechanisms at the breech. They too often had removable breech chambers, and a gun provided with several of these could keep up a fast rate of fire.

The return to Italy

The 'New City' of Naples (Neapolis) on the Italian west coast was the capital of an extensive kingdom in the south of the peninsula. It was defended by a complex of four castles located within three miles of each other, connected by mazes of narrow streets of multi-storey houses, and all surrounded by an exterior wall. The originally Norman-built Castel Capuano and Castel dell'Ovo had been transformed under a 13th-century Angevin dynasty into formidable edifices that protected the entrance to the city from the east and the harbour from the south, respectively. Castel Sant'Elmo was erected on a promontory with a commanding view of the city from the west, while the massively strong Castel Nuovo or 'New Castle' dominated the harbour itself.

The deaths of Louis of Anjou and Queen Giovanna by 1435 left Duke Louis's brother René of Anjou to renew the conflict as the French claimant to the throne of Naples. Alfonso of Aragon had little immediate cause for concern, however: following his defeat at Bulgnéville in 1431, the Angevin duke had spent the last four years as a hostage of Phillip the Good of Burgundy. With his ransom set at 400,000 *ecus d'or*, it was hardly likely that René would be taking command in Italy any time soon, and so the stalemate continued: Alfonso's troops held Castel Nuovo and Castel dell'Ovo, while René's allies dominated the city itself and much of the surrounding territory.

Alfonso concluded that he could improve his freedom of manoeuvre both by sea and inland if he controlled the port of Gaeta some 65 miles north of Naples. The Aragonese proceeded to bombard the city for three weeks, reducing the towers to ruins, but the Genoese defenders stubbornly held out by reinforcing the walls nightly. Alfonso was running low on both gunpowder and money to pay his Italian troops when he learned that a Genoese fleet was approaching to relieve Gaeta. Fearing another entrapment, Alfonso decided to lead his own fleet out to engage the enemy off the island of Ponza.

A savagely fought battle ensued on 5 August 1435; while the Aragonese raked their opponents' decks with gunfire, the Genoese responded with lethal showers of burning pitch, oil and quicklime. After hours of fighting, Alfonso's ship was rammed and overrun by boarders. He continued to defend the stern castle until the ship began to list, when, realizing that he and his knights were in immediate danger of drowning, he surrendered. However, when he declared that his royal rank demanded that he could yield himself only to Fillippo Maria Visconti, the Duke of Milan and Genoa's overlord, the Genoese reluctantly sent him and his retinue to Milan.

Alfonso then convinced Visconti that Milan's real enemy, Florence, was seeking French help in its dispute with Milan over Lombardy, and that Aragon could be his decisive ally (the king had learned much about Italian politics since his first campaign). In 1436 Visconti agreed to free Alfonso, disregarding the outrage of his unwilling Genoese vassals. Meanwhile Gaeta had fallen, not to force of arms but to an epidemic of disease that allowed the Aragonese to occupy the city without firing a shot. They established there a permanent centre of command for directing operations against both Naples and René of Anjou's allies throughout Calabria.

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In 1438, René of Anjou bought his way out of Burgundian captivity with a down-payment on his ransom and a promise of the rest once he reached Naples, which had been successfully blockaded by an allied Genoese fleet. Nevertheless, Alfonso controlled two-thirds of the wider kingdom, and the next five years saw the war bogged down in a stalemate of double envelopments. René's army was entrenched around Castel Nuovo at the port, while Alfonso's controlled access to the city by land; any troops who attempted to break through the enemy's lines immediately found themselves at the mercy of prepared positions on higher ground, and were forced back.

In 1440, Duke René of Anjou lost patience and slipped out of the city to join forces with the *condottiere* Antonio Caldero, in an attempt to force Alfonso into open battle before the town of Benevento. When Alfonso declined a challenge to personal combat, declaring 'Having won the war, I would be a fool to throw it all away on a battle', the Duke of Anjou launched an impetuous attack, but was quickly repelled when Caldero refused to commit his troops, arguing that Alfonso and his allies outnumbered them. Denied the support of his Italian army, René retreated to Naples and settled in for what would become the final siege.

In November 1441 Alfonso had an army of over 10,000 men encamped around the walls of the city. He established his headquarters on the heights to the east, where he emplaced 50 pieces of artillery within defensive earthworks, and began pounding Naples by day and night. Meanwhile his fleet now controlled the bay, thus cutting off the city from supply by sea and reducing it to starvation. After seven months of nearly continuous fighting René was contained, but he remained in command of a number of strategic positions, including the gate tower of Santa Sofia in the northern district.

There, on the night of 1/2 June 1442, a party of Aragonese soldiers discovered an ancient tunnel, crept under the city walls, and climbed upwards into a house through a well. They found the Santa Sofia gate tower almost unguarded, and although the alarm was sounded they shouted this discovery to their comrades outside, who immediately escaladed the walls. Seeing his banner raised on the tower, Alfonso rushed to direct the attack from outside while René galloped up and threw himself into the defence from within. The Duke of Anjou fought valiantly, personally slaying six men, but was forced to withdraw into his fortifications. Within hours the Aragonese army controlled the streets, and the victorious Alfonso rode into the centre of Naples to the astonishment of the citizens. Over the following weeks René surrendered his remaining castles one by one, buying time for him to slip away on a Genoese ship and escape to Provence; meanwhile, Alfonso subdued René's still-threatening Italian allies.

Alfonso V (centre) and his illegitimate son Ferdinando depicted symbolically receiving the surrender of René of Anjou at Naples; detail from a late 15th-century *cassone* painting. The painter was careful to distinguish the figures by their preference for French or Italian fashions. René of Anjou wears over his doublet a coat with puffed shoulders and wide, slit-open sleeves in the French manner. Alfonso V wears an Italian pleated tabard over his blackened plate armour, and under magnification his crown can be seen set on the *chaperon* hat. Ferdinando seems to wear Italian padded and embroidered 'coat armour', and a broad hat trimmed with black feathers. (Casket in Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL; photo author's collection)

The politics of spectacle

On 26 February 1443, King Alfonso V of Aragon staged a Classical Roman-style triumph through the city streets to publicly promote the legitimacy of his

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Alfonso's triumphal arch at Castel Nuovo. Designed by Francesco Laurana, who based it on the surviving Roman arch at Pula in his native Croatia, it depicts Alfonso enthroned on a canopied two-wheeled carriage drawn by four horses, inspired by an image from Constantine's Arch in Rome. Alfonso's artistic and architectural commissions anticipated by nearly 50 years the many Renaissance princes who would also invoke Classical allegory to support their claims to titles and domains they had usurped or conquered.

OPPOSITE Alfonso also commissioned a monumental statue of the Siren Parthenope in his efforts to enlist the support of the Neapolitan population, who referred to themselves as 'Parthenopeans' in reference to an ancient myth that the Siren's body had washed up on their shore. In so doing he was explicitly comparing himself to Ulysses, the mythic Greek hero who had spurned Parthenope, but who had now returned as her repentant saviour as personified in Alfonso. The inscription may be translated as: 'I, Parthenope, afflicted by so many years of war, now rest in peace by the efforts of Alfonso.' (Author's collection)

claims as King Alfonso I of Naples. Despite his formal adoption by Giovanna II, Alfonso had no real hereditary right to Naples; he knew that he had to appeal to its citizens, who had previously played a critical role in supporting the claims of Giovanna herself. Now, dressed in a crimson gown trimmed with ermine and clasped with a jewelled belt, he was seated on a golden throne mounted on a canopied carriage drawn by four white horses, and followed by a parade of the ranking Aragonese and Neapolitan nobility. The whole event was a brilliant act of statecraft by theatre. The triumph was itself commemorated with an arch constructed over the gate to Castel Nuovo; designed by Francesco Laurana, this came to be regarded as a wonder of the age. Alfonso then commissioned no less a master than Pisanello to create commemorative portrait medals that were to be circulated among his constituents, while Donatello was hired to design a life-size bronze equestrian statue of the king. By staging a triumphal entry into Naples and then sponsoring an arch to commemorate the event, Alfonso was invoking the rights of a returning Roman general.

Securing the dynastic succession

In his timeless study of statecraft, *The Prince*, Niccolò Machiavelli discusses two ways by which foreign rulers attempted to dominate Italian possessions. One was by conquest; this was both costly, and fostered a deep resentment among the subjugated that led to revolts. The other was by first establishing colonies of supporters, followed by the monarch residing in the state in person. This took far longer but was the more economical strategy – and it was precisely what Alfonso, one of the subjects of Machiavelli's study, had chosen to do.

While Alfonso was campaigning in Italy he had left his wife (and first cousin) María to handle affairs in Aragon. Tensions with Castile had continued; and as María was now 42 years old and childless, plans had to be made for securing the succession. Alfonso therefore arranged that upon his death his brother Juan, now King of Navarre, should serve first as co-regent with María, and ultimately succeed to the throne of Aragon. Naples was a different matter. While his marriage to María had not produced an heir, in 1423 Alfonso's mistress Giraldona Carlino Reverdit had borne him a son named Ferdinando. The youth accompanied his father on his second campaign in Italy, and proved himself a capable commander during the final siege. Alfonso therefore appointed him Duke of Calabria, making him his legitimate successor on the throne of Naples as a vassal to the crown of Aragon.

Finally, having recognized that any lasting success in Italy for the Trastámara dynasty would depend upon the election of Roman popes who recognized its legitimacy, Alfonso addressed himself to the schism that had divided the Papacy. He appointed his lawyer Alfonso de Borja, Bishop of Valencia, to negotiate the ultimate unification of Papal authority under Pope Eugene IV. Borja was charged with proposing a reconciliation that benefited both his king and his pontiff; for his success in this he was appointed cardinal in 1444, and 14 years later this Aragonese prelate himself became Pope Callixtus III. Callixtus's nephew Roderic Llancol i de Borja was in turn appointed Bishop of Valencia, but adopted the Italianized name 'Borgia'. In 1492 he would be elected as Pope Alexander VI, and this master of conspiratorial politics would continue to serve Aragonese interests.

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CONSOLIDATING TRASTÁMARA POWER

Alfonso commissioned Pisanello to design a parade armour, including this ornamental cuirass and a helmet decorated with the arms of Aragon and crested with a bat, the heraldic symbol of the cities of Valencia and Barcelona. The 15th century witnessed some extraordinary combinations of the armourer's craft with the fanciful imaginations of artists to create exotic harnesses recalling the myths of Greek and Roman heroes.
To what extent such armours were ever worn for battle, as opposed to ceremonial display, seems questionable – the purpose of armour was to allow blows to glance off, not to create 'blade traps' with raised detail. Nevertheless, one Italian knight appears on the Ringling Museum *cassone* fighting with Alfonso V at Naples while wearing a 'winged Mercury'-style helmet. The fact that he is shown in battle, individually distinguished by wearing an exotic helmet with his otherwise plain armour, is intriguing - see also a similar helmet in Plate D2. (Author's collection)

1469–79: the rise of Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragon

(Readers wishing to follow the complex genealogy of the Castilian and Aragonese royal houses are advised to refer back to the chart on page 9.)

On Alfonso V's death in 1458 his son Ferdinando I inherited the throne of Naples, while Alfonso's brother, already King of Navarre by marriage, became King Juan II of Aragon. Between uncle and nephew the Aragonese became for the time being the dominant sea power in the western Mediterranean. (Ferdinando's adoption of the vestigial title 'King of Jerusalem' also reflected Aragonese ambitions to challenge Venetian dominance in the eastern Mediterranean.)

Both kings ruled effectively throughout most of the second half of the 15th century – but not without challenges. Ferdinando made two political marriages; the first, to Isabela of Taranto, enobled him within the feudal system of southern Italy and brought him two sons, Alfonso and Federico. Following Isabela's death he married Juana (Joanna), daughter of his uncle Juan II of Aragon, thereby continuing the Trastámara tradition of marrying first cousins.

Iberian rivalries continued to plague Aragon during the reign of Juan II (r. 1458–79), just as they had during the regency of his brother Alfonso. The dispute over Antequera with the King of Castile had been resolved by a marriage alliance between the two families, for which the city served as a dowry. Nevertheless, the over-mighty Constable Álvaro de Luna of Castile had continued to contest lands and revenues with Aragon, climaxing in the battle of Olmedo in 1445. (Although this was a Castilian victory, less than ten years later Álvaro de Luna lost both his office and his head.) After the death of his first wife Blanca, Juan II soon found himself in dispute over the throne of Navarre with his son Carlos. The latter sought the support of Castile and Catalonia in his claim, but was defeated, imprisoned, and died in 1461, possibly poisoned by his stepmother Juana Enriquez of Córdoba. This left

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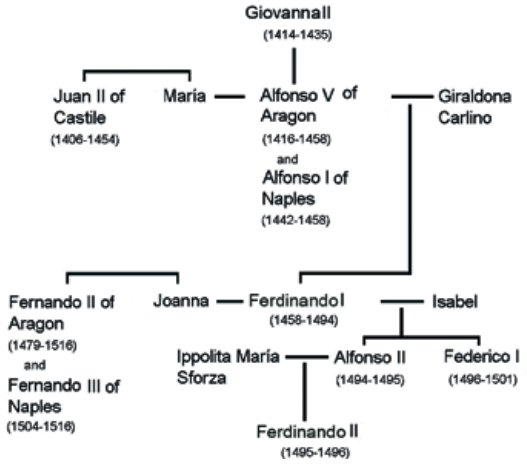

Genealogy of 15th-century rulers of the Kingdom of Naples. (Author's illustration)

Marble relief of King Ferdinando I of Naples (r. 1458–94). During his long reign, Alfonso's son was faced with persistent threats from Duke René of Anjou together with his son Duke Jean of Lorraine, from Cosimo de Medici of Florence, Ludovico Maria Sforza of Milan and King Charles VIII of France, as well as an Ottoman invasion of Otranto. (Author's collection)

Fernando, Juan II's son by Juana Enriquez, as sole heir to the throne of Aragon.

When Juan II of Castile (r. 1406–54) died, he was succeeded by Enrique IV, his son from his first marriage to María, sister to the Aragonese kings Alfonso V and Juan II. Enrique's reign was chaotic; like his father, he was plagued by ambitious upstarts and an entrenched nobility, all seeking to enrich themselves at the crown's expense. His first marriage to Blanca of Aragon failed, and she abandoned him. His second marriage to Juana of Portugal produced a daughter, Juana of Trastámara, but Enrique was pressured by his nobles to renounce her as heir to the throne of Castile in favour of his half-brother Alfonso, Prince of Asturias. When Alfonso died in 1468, Enrique's half-sister Isabel was named successor. Educated by her mother and grandmother under conditions of near-exile, Isabel had learned to be self-reliant. She rejected the proposed marriage alliances with which she was presented by her Castilian advisers, instead favouring Fernando, the heir to Aragon. The couple were married on 18 October 1469 (with the aid of Bishop Borgia of Valencia, who obtained Pope Pius II's blessing for a union that breached the normal laws of consanguinity). Isabel was at least her husband's equal in intelligence and energy, and their marriage would prove to be a remarkable partnership.

From the beginning, Fernando and Isabel were faced with considerable opposition to their union. Many rebellious Castilian nobles saw the marriage as the ultimate triumph of Juan II of Aragon's attempts to dominate their politics, but in the event it was the Portuguese who posed the greatest threat. The year after Enrique IV of Castile died in 1474, and was succeeded on the throne by Isabel, King Alfonso of Portugal married Enrique's daughter Juana of Trastámara and used her claim to the throne of Castile as a pretext for an invasion.

On 1 March 1476, at the head of an army of 8,500 Portuguese and Castilians, he faced Fernando with 7,500 loyal Castilians before the town of Toro some 50 miles west of Valladolid. Despite many advances in warfare over the past 50 years the opponents assembled in traditional lines of heavy cavalry *batallas*, with Alfonso and Fernando personally commanding their respective centres. Alfonso's son Prince João opened with a devastating charge that scattered Fernando's right wing, but when he had difficulty regrouping his knights Fernando immediately counter-attacked with a charge against King Alfonso himself. Combat lasted for two hours before the Portuguese began to break and retreat. Fernando's Castilians sacked their camp, ultimately capturing nine Portuguese noble banners including King Alfonso's royal standard. While Fernando lost more men on the battlefield itself, an equal number of casualties were suffered by his opponents, many of whom drowned while trying to cross the Duero river after nightfall.

Tactically the battle of Toro was a draw, with each side losing 800–1,200 men, but politically it was a Castilian triumph. Queen Isabel and

(Continued on page 33)

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14TH-CENTURY RULERS

1: King Pedro I of Castile, *c.*1367–69

2: King Enrique II of Castile, *c.*1369

3: John of Gaunt, King Consort of Castile & León, *c.*1386

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IBERIAN CAMPAIGNS, LATE 14TH–EARLY 15TH CENTURIES

1: Castilian *jinete*

2: Granadan Muslim horseman

3: Light spearman

B

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CAMPAIGNS OF FERNANDO I
1: Pero Niño, *c.*1405
2: Castilian grenade-thrower
3: King Fernando I of Aragon, *c.*1412

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ALFONSO'S NEAPOLITAN CAMPAIGNS

1: King Alfonso V of Aragon, 1440s

2: Catalan knight of Barcelona

3: Italian soldier, Kingdom of Naples

D

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ALFONSO'S NEAPOLITAN CAMPAIGNS

1: Aragonese artilleryman with light bombard, 1440s

2: Italian bowman

3: Galley sailor

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Early 16th-century portraits of Fernando of Aragon and Isabel of Castile, whose close partnership enabled them to achieve remarkable successes. The couple relied upon each other for support at times when insufficient funds, or infighting amongst court advisers, clerics and commanders threatened to impede their projects. Fernando was an able planner of campaigns and battlefield commander, and ruthless when it served his purpose; Isabel was not only a wise counsellor and diplomat, but a hard-working administrator with a real talent for organization and logistics. She also attracted near-reverence from her troops, visiting their frontline camps on a regular basis to supervise measures for their welfare. (Author's collection)

her consort had demonstrated their ability to defend her throne by force of arms, and the queen exploited their success to bring her restive nobles to heel. In 1479, King Juan II of Aragon died and Fernando acceded to the throne. Within three years, Queen Isabel I of Castile and King Fernando II of Aragon were turning their attention to the Moorish Amirate of Granada – the last remaining obstacle to the unification of Spain under their joint rule.

THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA

At this date the Amirate of Granada measured only about 200 miles east to west and 60 miles north to south, but it presented serious obstacles. The precipitous frontier mountains were traversed by narrow passes guarded by strong fortifications. Networks of signal towers and other means of communication enabled Muslim commanders to stay in daily contact with outlying areas and to rapidly deploy troops to meet threats. The mountain climate was also a problem for any invader; on several occasions during the coming war torrential rainstorms or blizzards would bring Fernando's siege trains of ox-carts to a standstill.

The conquest of Granada had been a Trastámara objective ever since Fernando I's campaigns of 1408 and 1410 had resulted in the subjugation of Zahara and Antequera, since when the frontier between Castile and Granada had remained in a state of flux. Both sides carried out raids for slaves and loot, but neither undertook operations serious enough to disrupt their mutual interdependence through trade. To create a unified national spirit in the new dual kingdom of Castile and Aragon, Fernando and Isabel needed to overturn this centuries-old attitude of relatively relaxed coexistence, and to promote their war against Granada as a true crusade.

1481–82: Zahara and Loja

Given the multiple sons produced by the harems of the amirs, Granada's ruling elite was even more susceptible to internal factionalism than was Christian Spain's. Despite institutional checks and balances on the transition of power between generations, the death of an amir could spark outright war between the factions of rival claimants. At any time

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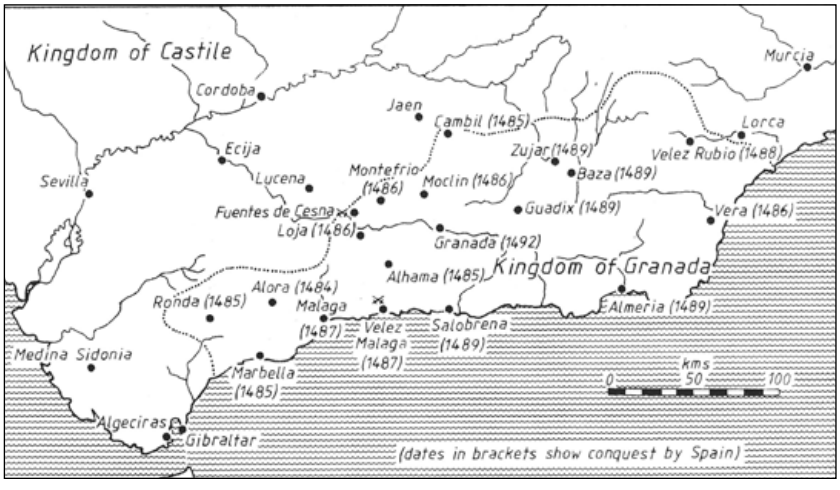
a ruler or an ambitious regional governor might seek to increase his influence by reviving age-old animosities, promising rich prizes to unite his constituencies for conquests of Castilian territory.

When Castile requested a tribute payment as part of the renewal of a truce between the two kingdoms, the Amir of Granada, Abu'l-Hasan, decided to test the resolve of the new Castilian-Aragonese alliance with the response that 'the mints of Granada no longer coin gold, but rather steel'. In 1481 a Granadan army attacked and took the city of Zahara in the west, and Isabel and Fernando regarded this serious political setback as grounds for a declaration of war. Two months later a 5,500-strong Castilian army led by the Marquis of Cadiz assembled at Antequera, and subsequently took Alhama lying only 40 miles from Granada city. Alhama was sacked, nearly a quarter of the population were killed, hundreds of Christian slaves were freed, and their jubilant liberators seized gold, silver, jewels and silk in great quantities.

In April 1482 Fernando led a supply expedition through the mountains to Alhama and began to personally reconnoitre the area. He decided on a bold move against Granada itself: the seizure of Loja, the western gateway onto the broad Vega plain that led to the capital. When he arrived at that town in July he positioned his artillery to bombard the walls, but soon realized that his troops were both heavily outnumbered and undersupplied; Loja had a garrison of 6,000 men, and a relief force led by the Amir Abu'l-Hasan was closing in from Granada. The opposing armies clashed during several days, until a feint sortie from Loja led Fernando's heavy cavalry into a trap in an olive orchard where they were cut down by Granadan light cavalry and crossbowmen. Fernando attempted to regroup, but was overwhelmed, and only escaped thanks to quick thinking by the Marquis of Cadiz and hard fighting by the royal bodyguard.

Developing the army

Fernando and Isabel realized that more than local resources would be needed to conduct a sustained war that might take many years, and in August 1482 Pope Sixtus IV greatly assisted their enterprise by issuing a Papal bull of crusade that entitled the 'Catholic Monarchs' to use church revenues within their domains to fund the campaign. However, the practical challenges of building an army capable of winning such a war were daunting. They needed to raise tens of thousands of troops, both cavalry to ravage the enemy's agricultural base and isolate his castles, and infantry to carry out sieges. They needed a large artillery train, to reduce castles quickly and thus shorten sieges. They needed a functioning supply system to sustain their armies in the



Map showing locations of major towns during the conquest of Granada from 1484. On the scale line 100km = 62 miles. (Map by David Nicolle)

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field – not only tens of thousands of mules, but also thousands of labourers supervised by engineers, to build roads for their gun-wagons and mule-trains. The impetus for all this would come from the very top: in organizing the army, throughout the long war, Queen Isabel proved herself so energetic and competent that the historian J.F.C. Fuller would judge her 'one of the ablest quarter-master generals in history', and 'the soul of the whole enterprise'.

Most of the troops would be provided by Castile, with Aragonese support mainly in the form of guns, ships and funds. Military manpower came from many sources, including barons with their feudal knights, light cavalry and infantry levies, but most were paid professionals. Since 1476 the so-called *Santa Hermandad* ('Holy Brotherhood'), answerable to the crown, had embodied locally conscripted light horse and crossbowmen led by professional soldiers; and the crown also hired Swiss mercenary infantry. Volunteers came from France, Burgundy, Flanders, Germany and England; in 1486 these would include such commanders as Sir Edward Woodville, who had fought at Bosworth Field with Henry Tudor the previous year, and the Senechal of Toulouse.

To enlarge the artillery, commanded by Don Francisco Ramirez, Isabel imported gunfounders from France, Germany and Italy; more powder mills were built, and cannonballs were both made locally and imported from Portugal, Sicily and Flanders. (Marble balls each weighing in excess of 150lb could still be seen in fields around Andalusian cities as late as the 19th century.) The army assembled at Cordoba was alleged to total up to 80,000 men with as many pack-animals. In fact the cavalry probably numbered 10,000–12,000, the infantry between 20,000 and 40,000 at any one time, plus unknown numbers of gunners and engineers; the pioneers who would build a causeway for the siege of Cambil in 1485 were said to number 6,000. To enable the efficient coordination of this massive programme, Isabel also created a military messenger service.

1483–87: exploiting Muslim disunity

While Abu'l-Hasan was conducting operations at Loja, his son Abû 'Abd 'Allah (called by the Castilians 'Boabdil') renounced his father's rule and assumed the title Amir Muhammed XII, hoping to negotiate with the Castilians to his own advantage. Abu'l-Hasan was forced to withdraw to the port of Málaga, where his brother al-Zagal ('the Valiant'), the architect of several Castilian defeats, continued to recognize his rule. In 1483 Boabdil was leading an expedition against the town of Lucena when he was captured, and sent to Fernando and Isabel. After demanding a substantial ransom, his son as hostage, and a two-year truce, Fernando then released Boabdil in hopes of profiting from a civil war within Granada; Boabdil was now in effect a vassal of Castile. In May 1485 Fernando began the first operation of his planned war of attrition: the capture of Ronda, which would open the way to Marbella he needed this port as a naval base from which to interdict Granada's sea links with Morocco.

Boabdil subsequently re-established himself within the eastern part of the amirate, but in 1485 al-Zagal ejected Boabdil from his base in Almeria, and after Abu'l-Hasan died from a stroke al-Zagal assumed the title Amir Muhammed XIII. Boabdil once again sought the assistance of Fernando and Isabel, who supplied him with Castilian troops. Al-Zagal soon had to face a revolt within his capital city as well as Castilian pressure from without.

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Detail from a remarkable carved choir stall in Toledo Cathedral, depicting the siege of Málaga in 1487. The footsoldiers wear sallets, one brigandine but mostly plate body armour over ringmail, and plate limb armour. They are armed with a bow and crossbows (left), and an *espingarda* arquebus (bottom right). Cannon of two classes are shown (bottom centre left): a heavy *bombard* with a ringed barrel, and a light *serpentine* on a wheeled carriage with an elevating system at the breech. Two gunners (bottom centre right) serve the lighter gun; one fires it with a long linstock, while the other hammers the tamping into a tankard-like removable breech chamber. Below left of the falling figure at top centre, note that the carver even depicts cannonballs striking the tower.

In September, Boabdil's supporters occupying the Albaicin quarter of the city of Granada engaged in seven weeks of bloody street fighting against the supporters of al-Zagal, who fortified himself within the Alhambra. However, since his agreement with the Castilians had expired, Boabdil then negotiated a truce with his uncle; in exchange for recognizing al-Zagal as the Amir of Granada, Boabdil would retain control of Almeria.

In 1486 Fernando forced the surrender of Marbella, gaining a valuable base for his fleet. The following season he moved on Loja once again, where Boabdil was now in command. This time Fernando had insured that he was properly supplied, and his bombards reduced Loja's walls. Al-Zagal refused to send relief, presumably in hopes of finally ridding himself of his treacherous nephew, and the town fell on 7 April 1487. Boabdil was captured once again, and once again Fernando released him to return to the eastern part of the amirate. By this time Fernando had reduced the area that al-Zagal actually controlled to barely half the territory of the amirate. Only the port of Málaga, Granada's principal source of resupply, remained to be taken before the capital was entirely surrounded.

Fernando moved south from his staging area at Antequera, but his heavy artillery became bogged down in the mud from the seasonal rains in the mountain passes. The king decided to leave the guns behind, and arrived before Velez-Málaga on 17 April. (During such situations, the Castilians were known to deploy as many as 25,000 mules and donkeys to transport everything from grain to light artillery pieces.) After surrounding the town Fernando offered favourable terms of surrender – but the garrison knew that they stood a good chance of successfully withstanding a siege against an opponent armed with only light artillery, and so declined Fernando's offer. When al-Zagal arrived from Granada with a large army Fernando was in danger of becoming trapped, but he decided to stand his ground, directing the Marquis of Cadiz to attack the amir's relief force. After hard fighting in the hills above the town al-Zagal was obliged to retreat to Granada – where, in his absence, Boabdil had attacked the city and seized the Alhambra. Velez-Málaga surrendered on 27 April, and Fernando marched along the coast to besiege Málaga itself.

Fernando and his advisers had already engaged with a pro-Castilian faction within the Málaga administration who could be induced to come

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to terms, but they underestimated the determination of a North African faction led by Hamet ez-Zegri, an al-Zagal loyalist, who wielded the real military authority within the city. From May until August 1487 Málaga was surrounded with siege works, and latterly was subjected to such a heavy bombardment that ships had to be sent to Aragon and Sicily to maintain the besiegers' supplies of powder and ball. It was now that Fernando brought Isabel and their children forward to join him in the camp, which was good for the soldiers' morale. A relief expedition sent by al-Zagal was ambushed and defeated by Boabdil. Cut off from maritime resupply by the Castilian naval blockade, and packed with refugees, Málaga was reduced to such starvation that the citizens were stripping the bark off trees. When Spanish miners created a practicable breach the citizens finally surrendered on 18 August 1487 – but Fernando had warned them of their fate if they refused his earlier offer of terms. He imprisoned virtually the entire population of approximately 11,000 citizens; some were swapped for Christian slaves held in North Africa, those who could not pay their ransoms were enslaved, and some were even sent as diplomatic 'gifts' to noble households throughout Europe.

Gold ducat portraying Fernando and Isabel on the face, and the united heraldry of Castile and Aragon on the reverse. This design invited loyalty to the 'Catholic Monarchs' from those paid in this currency, whether they were Castilian or Aragonese, and promoted the concept of a unified Spain. (Private collection)

1488–92: the final campaigns

The siege of Málaga had exhausted Castilian resources, but Fernando and Isabel knew that they had to defeat al-Zagal before they could enforce a final settlement on his nephew Boabdil. Al-Zagal had retreated to Almeria, and in 1488 Fernando marched into the eastern part of the amirate. A number of towns were taken temporarily, but shortages of troops and supplies prevented their being garrisoned effectively, and many were given up again.

In May 1489 the king moved on the fortified city of Baza; with the support of personal funds from among the Castilian nobility, he was able to field an army of perhaps 13,000 cavalry and 45,000 infantry. Despite fierce resistance, Fernando succeeded in establishing a series of trenches and fortifications around the city that enabled him to sustain his siege while fending off attacks from al-Zagal's relief forces. On 4 December 1489 Baza surrendered, and the Amir al-Zagal finally came to terms with Fernando, giving up Almeria and Guadix as well. Shortly thereafter al-Zagal left for Morocco, where he was imprisoned by Boabdil's ally the Amir of Fez and died five years later.

Fernando and Isabel now expected Boabdil to surrender the city of Granada and to retire to the estates that they had promised him, but the last Amir of Granada declared that he was not bound by the treaties he had made. It was a gamble, perhaps forced upon this weak ruler by powerful individuals within the city; but Boabdil knew that Castilian resources were exhausted, and that towns throughout the kingdom were rebelling against the heavy taxation to finance the war. A return to the traditional raiding-and-pursuit tactics saw Boabdil temporarily regain territory in the surrounding Alpujarras hills, only to lose it to the Castilians a few weeks later.

In spring and again in autumn 1490, Fernando's light cavalry ravaged the fertile Vega plain around the city. With Granada finally cut off from any sources of resupply, in April 1491 Fernando arrived with an alleged 80,000 men (and certainly a very large army). While he waited for his heavy guns to catch up, he signalled his determination by building a huge

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16th-century illustration of indigenous Tainos mining gold in Cuba under Spanish guard. (Author's collection)

siege camp based on the ancient Roman model. Queen Isabel was once again seen riding the camp's tented streets, checking every detail of organization and supply, distributing food and medicines and spreading encouragement. Inside the city Boabdil was hampered by treachery and corruption; starvation also did its grim work, and on 5 October he asked for a truce to discuss terms. These were settled on 25 November, to come into effect in another 60 days.

On 2 January 1492 Boabdil surrendered the Alhambra of Granada to Ferdinand, finally bringing to an end the 700-year *Reconquista*. The terms of the agreement were surprisingly liberal, but they were not to be honoured for long. Their defeat of Granada brought the 'Catholic Monarchs' considerable fame throughout Europe, and also tremendous wealth. Granada was now proclaimed 'heretic' in the eyes of the Christian church, so its citizens lost title to their property. Material wealth in the form of precious metals, gems and coin was seized, and much land was given to Christians by way of reward for service. All of this was further augmented by the expulsion of the entire Jewish population of not only Granada, but also Castile and Aragon, under the Alhambra Decree of 31 March 1492. These ruthless steps brought in a windfall that enabled the Monarchs to invest in new ventures, and one overseas expedition would before long reap even greater profits.

THE CARIBBEAN

Christopher Columbus, a Genoese veteran of naval conflicts against the Aragonese in his youth, was a soldier as well as a seaman, who credited René of Anjou with giving him his first commission. His fascination with navigational methods and historical accounts of distant lands had led him to propose that Spain could compete with Portugal for access to the Far East, by sailing directly across the Atlantic rather than around the African continent. The Catholic Monarchs, newly enriched by the subjugation of Granada, invested in the expedition, and on 12 October 1492 Columbus, with a carrack and two caravels, made landfall in the Bahamas.

Columbus then began to explore the coastlines of the successive islands of the Antilles group, and in 1493 he landed on the north coast of Hispañola (then named Española, today Haiti/Santo Domingo). There he obtained the agreement of a powerful *cacique* or chief of the Taino people, Guacanagarí, to his founding the settlement of Natividad. Columbus then returned to Spain and presented the gold and slaves he had acquired to Fernando and Isabela, who rewarded him with the title Admiral of the Seas as well as the governorship of the colony, and commissioned a second expedition. (In this, Pope Alexander VI aided the Monarchs; his 'Bulls of Donation' of 1493 gave them control over much of the Western hemisphere.)

When Columbus returned he found that Natividad had been destroyed and the colonists killed; Guacanagarí claimed that a rival chief had been responsible, although there were reports that rape and looting by the settlers had provoked his anger. Columbus could hardly afford to start a war; instead he founded a second fortified town to the east, named Isabela, from where he could directly access the Cibao goldfields of the interior mountains.

By 1497 the town of Isabela had a thriving population of several

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thousand, and Columbus himself had moved inland to establish a series of forts, where he was taxing the Taino chiefs at 60,000 *pesos*-worth of gold per year. Those who could not meet their quotas began to contribute goods like local cotton, which was found to be far more durable for lightweight clothing than anything known in Europe at that time. However, as Columbus extended his possessions this flood of wealth elicited envy from other parties at court, bringing accusations of corruption. The Monarchs began to issue licences to other entrepreneurs who wished to open trade links or otherwise 'conquer and settle' in the Caribbean, thereby breaking Columbus's monopoly. Competition led to hostilities between the rival Spaniards, climaxing with open rebellion, and in 1500 Fernando and Isabel had Columbus returned to Spain in chains to answer charges of misconduct.

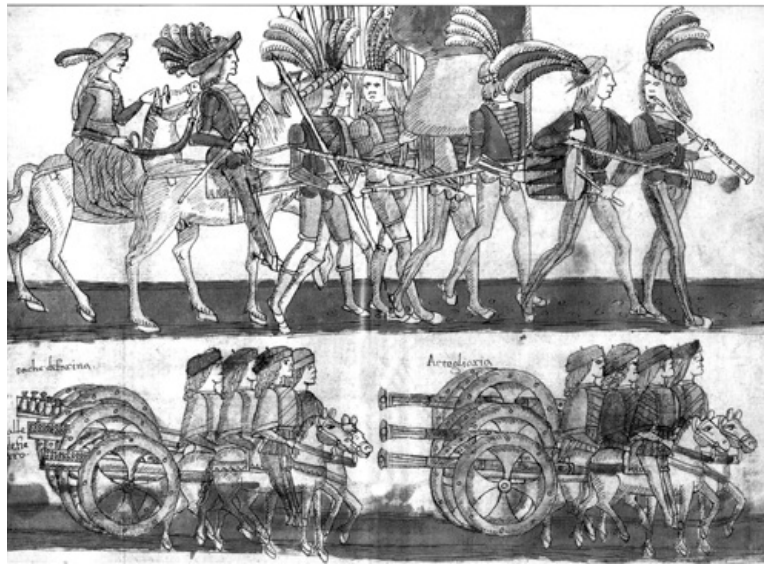
Subsequently exonerated, the admiral made a fourth voyage in 1503 along the mainland coast of Central America between Honduras and Panama, where he encountered fleets of sea-going trading canoes bearing extraordinary amounts of gold and textiles produced by the Maya civilization of the mainland. However, his principal benefactor Queen Isabel died in 1504 before he could report on this discovery, and he himself died less than two years later. By now King Fernando had assigned his own administrators to the colonies in the Antilles, many of whom began to sponsor brutal military campaigns against the Tainos not only on Hispañola but also on Puerto Rico and Cuba. These resulted in the export of over 9 million grams of gold, enabling the crown to finance its newly extended grip over southern Italy.

GONZALO DE CÓRDOBA IN ITALY

1494–95: the French invasion

In the meantime, a precarious balance between the powers in Italy had come to an end when Ludovico Maria Sforza, then serving as regent of the Duchy of Milan, enlisted the aid of King Charles VIII of France in a dispute with Florence, the Papacy, and the Kingdom of Naples. As a result, the peninsula would become the principal battleground of the major European powers for the next half-century in what have come to be known as the Italian Renaissance Wars.

The French king had his own agenda reaching far beyond Milan. When King Ferdinando I of Naples died in January 1494, he left the throne to his son Alfonso II. However, Charles VIII declared



Contemporary illustration of the army of King Charles VIII of France marching into Naples in 1495. Several details suggest that the upper tier may represent Swiss mercenaries, wearing their characteristic plumed turbans. Most striking are the light horse-drawn cannon (bottom right) of the class usually termed *serpentines.* They are followed (bottom left) by very similar carriages carrying ammunition, identified as 'bags of powder' and 'iron balls'. The rapid advance of the French army in 1494–95 was attributed by some to the mobility of Charles VIII's artillery train, though by others to his terror tactics in some captured cities. (Author's collection)

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that since his own father had inherited René of Anjou's claim to the kingdom, he himself was the rightful heir. Two months later, Charles was marching through Italy with an army of 30,000 troops including 8,000 Swiss mercenaries. One city-state after another fell to them; in some cases the invaders not only looted the cities but burned them and slaughtered their populations, thereby spreading terror before them. By January 1495 Charles VIII had entered Rome; here the devious Borgia Pope Alexander VI came to terms with him, and even declared him to be in Italy at Papal invitation for the planning of a crusade against the Ottoman Empire.

Charles left Rome and resumed his march south. Alarmed by the speed of his approach, King Alfonso II of Naples abdicated the throne in favour of his son Ferdinando II, and fled to Sicily. Shortly thereafter Charles captured both Gaeta and Capua, thereby cutting off the city of Naples from the wider kingdom. Ferdinando II was himself forced to abandon his capital for the island fortress of Ischia, whence he sent an urgent appeal for military assistance to his great-uncle Fernando II of Aragon.

By now Venice, Florence, and Milan were organizing a league ostensibly in response to Pope Alexander's appeal for his 'crusade', but the coalition's actual purpose was very different. On 6 July 1495, having decided to leave an occupation force in Naples and return to France, Charles found himself confronting an Italian army led by Francesco Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, at Fornovo about 20 miles south-west of Parma. Despite the ferocity of the Italian attack, which cost them 1,300 men, the French successfully defended their position and continued their march.

While it represents King Louis XII of France during the subsequent French invasion of Genoa in 1507, this image gives an impression of the heavy cavalry *gens d'armes* faced by Córdoba's army a few years previously. (Author's collection)

At the same time as Charles was retreating to the north, in the south a fleet of 30 ships had landed 5,500 Spanish troops under the command of Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, a veteran of the Granada campaign known for both his courage and his diplomatic skills. Córdoba united his troops with those of Ferdinando of Naples, and the joint army proceeded inland until they reached Seminara, a fortified town about 30 miles from Reggio. Here, on 28 June, they were met by a French force under the command of Marshal d'Aubigny, including French heavy cavalry, Scottish bowmen and Swiss pikemen. The French opened the attack by crossing a stream that separated the two armies. Córdoba responded by sending in his cavalry, largely composed of *jinetes*, who threw the French ranks into disorder with their rapid hit-and-run tactics. However, the action confused Ferdinando's Calabrian militia, who mistook a tactical withdrawal by the Castilian cavalry for a defeated flight. They began to retreat in disorder before advancing blocks of Swiss pikemen, while the French heavy cavalry charged against their left flank and rode them down. Ferdinando himself was nearly captured, and only Córdoba's steady delaying actions enabled the remnants of the army to withdraw into the town.

Despite this battlefield victory the French had achieved little. The arrival of the Spanish had convinced the leaders of Naples that it was in their best interests to recognize Ferdinando as their legitimate king; they rose up and slaughtered the French troops who had been left there,

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forcing the main French army to retreat up the coast. Over the following year Córdoba gradually retook Calabria by employing patient mobile tactics including Castilian cavalry *razzias*, as perfected during the wars against the Moors. Córdoba's conduct and wisdom impressed his allies, who christened him *'el Gran Capitán'* after his victory at Atella in 1496. He harassed the French until they were either evacuated from sea ports or were forced to surrender their inland garrisons, which were weakened by starvation, plague and syphilis (the latter allegedly brought back from the Caribbean by sailors).

In this painting, Spanish gunners armed with matchlock arquebuses are drawn up on the flank of pikemen within a *coronélia* formation, which would also have included swordsmen. Such combined-arms tactics were already in basic use during the Swiss wars of the 1480s, but were fully developed in Italy in *c.*1500 by Fernando II's general Gonzalo de Córdoba. Note that the arquebusiers are shooting from the hip to blast gaps in the enemy ranks to be exploited by swordsmen, while the pikemen provide a solid defensive base until the moment comes to push forward into the disordered enemy. (Detail from *The Siege of Alesia* by Melchior Feselen, 1533; original in Alte Pinakothek, Munich; photo author's collection)

1501–03: Cerignola and the Garigliano

By 1501 King Ferdinando II of Naples had died, and Fernando II of Aragon and King Louis XII of France signed an agreement to partition that kingdom between them, but the treaty was so vaguely worded that conflict was inevitable. Fernando ordered Córdoba to systematically reclaim towns throughout the region including the port of Taranto, which he besieged. When King Louis crossed the Alps with his army in July 1502 he was astonished at how much territory Córdoba controlled, and provoked a new Italian war by demanding that the Spanish general surrender many of the subjugated towns to him. Fernando responded by dispatching gold and 6,000 additional troops to Córdoba, while his brother-in-law, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, contributed 2,000 German Landsknechts, famous rivals of the Swiss employed by the French.

From headquarters at Barletta on the Adriatic, Córdoba employed delaying tactics against the French and their allies while he retrained his army. Since 1493 a series of Spanish royal ordinances had begun a process of creating an embryo professional army, and by 1497 the infantry were being organized in three distinct categories: pikemen, sword-and-buckler men, and a mix of crossbowmen and handgunners. Shocked by the devastating impact of the massed Swiss pikemen at Seminara, Córdoba developed new tactics designed to counter their impenetrable phalanx. Crossbowmen were increasingly replaced by handgunners armed with the new matchlock arquebus. Whole units of these gunners could advance under the protection of their own pike phalanx, blow holes in the opposing formation, and withdraw to reload covered by the pikes of their comrades. Meanwhile, swordsmen charged into the resultant gaps and slashed away at the nearest enemy pikemen, whose long, heavy weapons were a useless encumbrance at such close quarters. Once the integrity of the pike block began to unravel it was at a serious disadvantage. Córdoba's new large *coronélia* formation of about 6,000 men was to comprise 12 *companias* each of 500 men; two of these were to be of pikemen alone, but the other ten each had 200 pikemen, 200 sword-and-buckler men and 100 arquebusiers.

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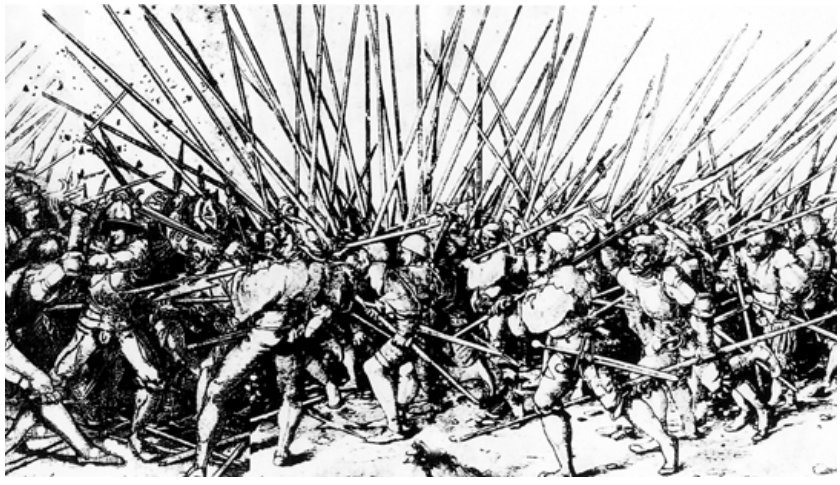

Carefully detailed and atmospheric drawing of Swiss halberdiers (right and foreground) trying to stop armoured Spanish swordsmen (left) who are cutting their way into a disordered pike block. Córdoba's new infantry organization owed its success against the less versatile Swiss pike phalanx to the shock impact of massed arquebusiers, exploited by the agile offensive capability of the swordsmen, both underpinned by the solidity of their own pike block. This marked the birth of an infantry tactical revolution that would develop to shape European warfare for more than three centuries. (After 'Bad War' by Hans Holbein; photo author's collection)

Gonzalo de Córdoba's army met the French at Cerignola, about 20 miles inland from the Adriatic coast, on 28 April 1503. The Spanish took up a defensive position on a slope behind a prepared trench with a low rampart and wooden stakes. This stopped the first rash charge by the French heavy cavalry, who were then shot down at close range; the French commander, the Duke of Nemours, was among the slain. When the Swiss infantry advanced they too were delayed by the ditch and stakes, and slaughtered by the massed arquebusiers. The French lost 4,000 men, and the survivors retreated all the way to the fortified port of Gaeta on the opposite coast of the peninsula. Córdoba then returned to Naples, where he drove the French garrison out of Castel Nuovo, resupplied his army, and marched north.

By the end of summer 1503 Córdoba had reached Gaeta, but when he received news that a second French army of some 20,000 men was approaching from the north-east he feared entrapment. In October he trailed the enemy down the Garigliano river, and took up a position just south of Gaeta. After an initial clash in which the French lost more than 1,000 men while attempting to cross a bridge they had built over the river, the armies became deadlocked by the onset of winter. Córdoba directed his men to construct trenches, while the French were left to manage as best they could in camps while their commanders withdrew to the comforts of Gaeta to celebrate the Christmas season.

The discovery of the New World in the Western Hemisphere inspired the Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–56) to adopt the Pillars of Hercules (symbolizing the Straits of Gibraltar) as part of his heraldry, with the motto *Plus Ultra*, 'Further Beyond'.

On 29 December, Córdoba launched a surprise attack by spanning the Garigliano opposite the northern part of the French position with a prefabricated bridge that he had brought up and assembled the night before. At dawn the Spanish crossed in force, and drove the enemy into a retreat down the muddy banks of the river. There they were intercepted by a cavalry division that had overrun the French bridge further south. Although the French managed to regroup and hold for a few hours at a defile, they had abandoned all their equipment including their artillery; this cost them their ability to function as an army in the field, and so they withdrew into Gaeta.

This defeat forced King Louis XII to come to terms, ceding

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Naples to Aragon in return for recognition of his suzerainty over Milan. Córdoba governed as viceroy until he was personally relieved by King Fernando, and retired to his estates in Spain. Fernando, at first thwarted by supporters of his son-in-law Phillip in his attempt to hold the throne of Castile after Isabel's death, also returned to Spain; he was appointed regent for his daughter Juana and his grandson Charles of Austria after Phillip's death. In 1508 he formed an alliance with his former enemy Louis XII and Pope Julius II to check Venetian expansion in northern Italy. This destructive eight-year War of the League of Cambrai saw the Spanish army – the first truly cohesive national force that the West had seen since the time of the Roman Empire – claim victory after victory, heralding an age of unprecedented Spanish dominance over the battlefields of Europe.

A legacy for empire

Isabel had died in 1504; she was followed by Fernando in 1516, and with him the Trastámara dynasty ended. But their grandson Charles of Austria succeeded Fernando as Carlos I, the first king of a united Spain; and three years later he was elected as the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, ruler of vast and wealthy territories across Europe.

While fighting a whole series of bloody Italian wars against the French, Charles would also direct his captains out across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to conquer empires on new continents. After serving in Italy, many humble Spanish soldiers would return home to find that their farms had been seized by wealthy nobles. Landless and unemployed, thousands had no choice but to travel 'further beyond' – to the Americas, where they participated in the conquests of the Aztec and Inca empires. Their legacy lives on: today more than 500 million people throughout the world speak Spanish as their first language.

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PLATE COMMENTARIES

(With additional research notes by Gerry Embleton.)

A: 14TH-CENTURY RULERS

A1: King Pedro I of Castile, *c.*1367–69

Plagued by attempts to usurp his throne by his half-brothers, among others, Pedro I frequently resorted to murder to defend his inheritance, leading his contemporaries to call him 'Pedro the Cruel'. He was known for enlisting both Muslim and Jewish troops, who fought in his army at Monteil. There are no contemporary images of the king, but he was described as being tall and muscular, with a pale complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. A painting of the battle of Monteil that accompanies a 15th-century edition of the *Chronicles* of Froissart shows him swinging a battleaxe, and wearing a crowned 'war hat' and bevor. The reconstruction of Pedro's armour is derived from a number of Spanish tomb effigies of the 14th century, when a slow and irregular transition was taking place, from various combinations of mail with plates and hardened-leather elements towards complete plate. The 'hour-glass' silhouette is characteristic of the period; see illustration on page 3.

A2: King Enrique II of Castile, *c.*1369

Enrique of Trastámara was the eldest son of Alfonso XI by his mistress Leonor de Guzmán, but was enobled and raised as a peer at court, which caused considerable turmoil within Alfonso's family. Shortly after Pedro acceded to the throne in 1350 he had Enrique's mother executed. Enrique served thereafter in the armies of King Jean II of France and King Pedro IV of Aragon, who supported his claim to the throne of Castile. At this time Iberian nobility were beginning to affect the manners, dress and military gear of their English and French counterparts, and are depicted wearing richly embroidered surcoats over their plate armour. Enrique's armour and mail are thinly gilded overall.

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A3: John of Gaunt, King Consort of Castile and León, *c.*1386

The brother of Edward, 'Black Prince' of Wales, the Duke of Lancaster enjoyed immense wealth and power. Although his estates were the largest in England he knew that he would never rule there, so he sought an overseas kingdom. His marriage to Constanza, daughter of Pedro I, entitled him to claim the throne of Castile, and he redesigned his heraldry to incorporate the arms of that kingdom. This image is based on a famous 16th-century painting in the collections of the Duke of Beaufort that portrays him wearing fine Italian armour with a blackened finish, and the Castilian crown; it is believed to be based on earlier, more nearly contemporary portraits. The sword is taken from an example formerly in the Instituto del Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.

B: IBERIAN CAMPAIGNS, LATE 14TH–EARLY 15TH CENTURIES

B1: Castilian *jinete*

Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries the varied Iberian landscape and the nature of frontier fighting obliged Christian armies to deploy large numbers of light cavalry as well as heavily armoured knights. Light cavalry or *jinetes* followed Muslim traditions, being clothed for a hot climate and armoured with combinations of ringmail and brigandines, sometimes with plate or leather limb protection. They were mounted on sturdy 'Barbs' (i.e. 'Berber' horses, referring to their Moroccan origins), and used javelins as their primary weapon. Although generally deployed in dispersed formations, they could also assemble into divisions to ride forward, shower an enemy with a barrage, and immediately retreat to avoid pursuit.

B2: Granadan Muslim horseman

Castile recruited mounted troops from Granada to fulfil the amirate's obligations as a vassal kingdom. Expert with the recurved composite bow, they operated as advanced parties to seek out an enemy, disrupt his logistics during deployment, pursue a retreating army, or screen their own troops during a withdrawal.

B3: Light spearman

Iberian infantry were adapted to the rugged mountain terrain that separated Castile from Granada as well as the Pyrenees. They wore light functional clothing and minimal armour, enabling them to travel quickly across country and carry out the *razzia* tactics of hit-and-run for which they had become famous.

C: CAMPAIGNS OF FERNANDO I

C1: Pero Niño, *c.*1405

Niño was a Castilian knight who served both King Enrique III and his brother Fernando, regent of Castile and King of Aragon; he commanded a fleet of galleys and ships during a series of expeditions against both North African corsairs and the southern coast of England. This pioneer in sea warfare wears armour suitable to his status and wealth; he is described as wearing an iron 'cap' *(cervellière)* into combat. His falchion is a single-edged weapon that combined the power of an axe with the versatility of a sword, anticipating the later cutlass.

C2: Castilian grenade-thrower

Timber ships rigged with rope and canvas were susceptible to incendiary devices of all kinds. The heads of arrows and crossbow quarrels were fitted with flammable materials such as tow soaked in tar, which was ignited and shot into the sails and rigging. Fire aloft could reduce a ship's manoeuvrability or even stop it dead in the water. When the range closed, clay pots filled with quicklime or oil were also hurled amongst the enemy crowding the decks by specially trained men armed with pole-slings; lime could blind and burn, while incendiary fillings could set fires on the decks.

C3: King Fernando I of Aragon, *c.*1412

After the death of his brother Enrique III in 1406, Fernando served as co-regent of Castile during the childhood of his young nephew Juan II. An accomplished knight, field commander and politician, Fernando assumed the throne of Aragon six years later when its king died without a legitimate male heir. His subsequent administration of the two kingdoms laid the foundation for unification by his grandson Fernando II. His appearance is based on an Aragonese king depicted in a 15th-century *retablo* now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; it nominally commemorates the battle of Puig in 1237, but is believed to portray Fernando himself in armour contemporary to the painting.

D: ALFONSO'S NEAPOLITAN CAMPAIGNS

D1: King Alfonso V of Aragon, 1440s

Alfonso is depicted in a period painting executed on a *cassone* or wedding casket preserved in the Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida. He is wearing Milanese-style armour with rounded surfaces and a *barbuta* helmet, while rallying his men outside the walls during the siege of Naples. Alfonso was responsible for introducing much Italian fashion into Spain during the mid-15th century,

Iberian fighting men were largely responsible for acquiring their own weapons and armour. In the 15th century much was imported or copied from Italy, which produced relatively inexpensive items as well as fine-quality armours for the elite. (Left) Part of the equipment of a 15th-century crossbowman, including a 'war-hat' helmet, a breastplate with *faulds*, the distinctive *pavise* shield, and a steel-stave crossbow. (Right) *Barbuta* helmet, mid-15th century, above a late 14th-century *bascinet* with a 'houndskull' visor; older armour could last for generations, being passed from hand to hand until it was no longer thought worth repairing or modifying. Despite the promise of riches at the outset of campaigns, many brought in just enough loot to distribute among the armies for men to re-equip themselves for the next venture. (Private collection)

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and leading armour manufacturers everywhere both imported and exported styles internationally.

D2: Catalan knight of Barcelona

As Count of Barcelona, a title originally created by Charlemagne, Alfonso could enlist troops from the county in return for investing in the commercial endeavours of the city's merchants. The armour reconstructed here is based on a silver figure of St George from the chapel of Sant' Jordi de la Disputaciò in Barcelona, dated to the 1420s–30s (see also caption on page 23). Few knights could afford to keep equipping themselves with up-to-date fashions in armour; many wore composite armours, perhaps with elements modified in the latest styles.

D3: Italian soldier, Kingdom of Naples

Soldiers with access to the rich markets of Italy might dress in finery, such as this gold-embroidered black coat worn by an infantryman appearing on the Ringling Museum of Art *cassone.* The *barbuta* helmet was a mid-15th-century development whose T-shaped front opening combined maximum face protection with good visibility; some examples had a short nasal, recalling the ancient 'Corinthian' style. It might be painted, or completely covered with coloured velvet or other cloth.

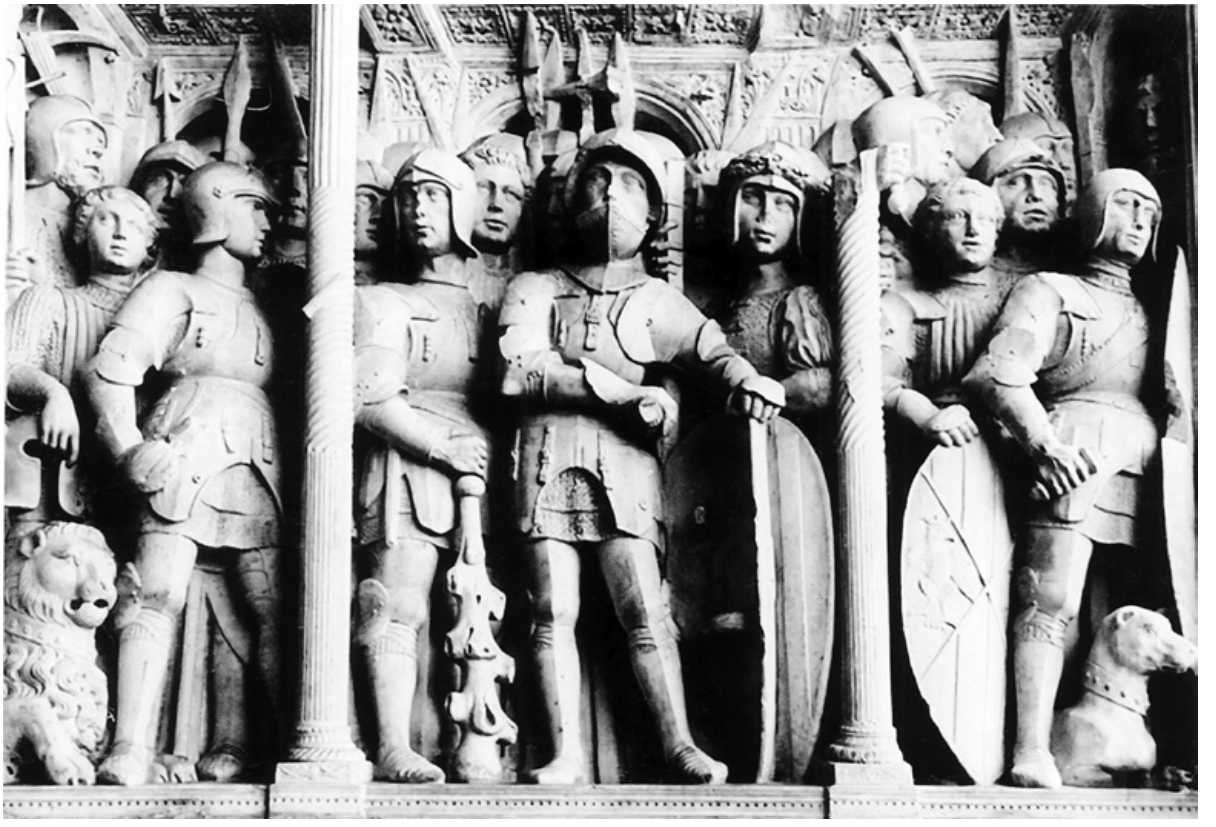
E: ALFONSO'S NEAPOLITAN CAMPAIGNS

E1: Aragonese artilleryman with light bombard, 1440s

Alfonso V was unable to enlist a large expeditionary army in the Iberian peninsula due to the demands of intermittent conflicts within the Trastámara family over the administration of Castile. One solution was to invest in both light and heavy artillery, which he transported to Italy via Sicily. The Ringling Museum of Art *cassone* depicts the use of small bronze bombards to support an Aragonese scaling-ladder attack against the walls of Naples, and an Italian-made iron bombard of comparable size survives in the Turin Artillery Museum.

E2: Italian bowman

Italian bowmen preferred the relatively short, recurved composite bow that had been introduced from the Turkish Balkans by the Venetians. This individual is a composite of a soldier appearing on the Ringling Museum of Art casket with



Detail from the triumphal arch of Alfonso V, Castel Nuovo, Naples, depicting Aragonese knights of the 1440s. Most wear armour in the Milanese style; the central knight's large, asymmetric *pauldrons* and buckled-on *plackart* and angular *tassets* recall some features of the famous Missaglia-made armour now in the Scott Collection in Glasgow. The preferred helmet is the deep, open-faced *celata* (sallet) with or without a dropping visor; the visor is clear on the figure with the ragged club (centre left). However, the central knight wears a closed-face sallet tipped back on his head, together with a *bevor* over his lower face and throat; note, too, the classic *barbuta* (far left, on lion). Two figures (far left & second right) show padded Italian 'soft armour' worn over mail and plate respectively, and one (centre right) wears a buckled brigandine over a coat with puffed shoulders. Some of the polearms (centre background) seem to be glaives and a long war-hammer. Two shields are of the quasi-oval or teardrop shape long used in Italy for dismounted combat; one (lower right) bears the arms of Sicily: gold-crowned black eagles on white, superimposed 'per saltire' on the red and yellow bars of Aragon. (Author's collection)

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other contemporary sources. His black doublet is attached to his hose by tied 'points'.

E3: Galley sailor

This seaman is illustrated as if bringing up gunpowder from the harbour to the artillery lines; he is dressed in the loose-cut clothing generally favoured by sailors. Galleys were manned by crews of both professional sailors, and men-at-arms who received special pay for serving the oars upon which the galley depended for its speed and manoeuvrability in combat. Operating out of their galley arsenal at Barcelona, the Catalonian navy ranged throughout the Mediterranean, and seem to have been the first medieval European sailors to take Mediterranean galleys into the open Atlantic. In heavy seas they took great skill to handle, but in calm weather they could outmanoeuvre ships dependent on the wind alone, and the *ballingers* of the English.

F: THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA

F1: King Fernando II of Aragon, late 1480s

Fernando was a capable and courageous field commander, who was nearly captured or killed during a number of his campaigns against Granada. He is depicted here in an armour attributed to him and preserved in the Kunsthistorischesmuseum in Vienna. It is of late 15th-century Italian style but incorporates a number of Spanish details, such as the 'fish-tail' *plackart* covering the lower part of his breastplate.

F2: Queen Isabel I of Castile, late 1480s

During the first half of the war against Granada the energetic 'queen-at-arms' served as political advocate, war counsellor, and chief coordinator for the provision of troops, supplies, and money from Madrid. But to maintain the loyalty of their heterogeneous army it was necessary for the 'Christian Monarchs' to keep themselves visible to the troops, and during the later campaigns Isabel moved to the frontline camps. There she established both field kitchens and field hospitals for the wounded and sick, and came to be regarded by many of her soldiers as another Joan of Arc (a figure whom Isabel revered). Her appearance here is based on an image carved on a choir stall from Toledo Cathedral, where she is portrayed entering the conquered city of Gor in armour and carrying a mace of command.

F3: Herald

Heralds were officers of arms who were used by monarchs to convey personal messages to foreign diplomats and proclamations to the citizens of communities. The tabard or surcoat they wore bore the heraldry of their monarch as visible confirmation of their status and the authority with which they spoke. This herald of Fernando and Isabel wears the quartered arms of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon. His black cap is of a style just coming into fashion at this time.

G: THE CARIBBEAN

G1: Christopher Columbus, 1490s

No image from life survives, but Columbus was described by his son as being long-faced with high, ruddy cheekbones. He had blue eyes, an aquiline nose, and blonde hair turning grey which he wore long and parted in the middle. He probably owned a full armour whose elements he might wear in a number of ways. We reconstruct him in a typically deep Spanish 'war hat' and a good-quality Italian breast-and-back cuirass with an elegant sword, and half-boots for negotiating the dense inland bush of the Caribbean islands.

G2: Castilian crossbowman

Columbus was working within a modest budget during his first expedition, and he and his men had little to invest in armour or weaponry. There is no evidence for the use of any of the heavy armour then increasingly worn in Europe by men-at-arms on foot, such as the specimens preserved in the Royal Armoury in Madrid. The only account we have is of Queen Isabel supplying his expedition with 100 crossbows; these were favoured over arquebuses as a projectile weapon against the Tainos, probably because although they lacked the 'shock' factor they were faster to reload and more reliable.

G3: Guacanagarí, Taino *cacique*

Columbus found that Hispañola was dominated by five rival chiefdoms of the Taino people, whose seafaring ancestors had spread across the Antilles from Venezuela more than a millennium earlier. Ranking chiefs wore facial ornamentation together with necklaces and pendants wrought from gold; forming an alliance with the paramount chief Guacanagarí, Columbus began to trade for the precious metal. When his carrack *Santa Maria* ran aground off the island's north coast, it was Guacanagarí who helped salvage the supplies and timber to construct the colony of Natividad.

H: THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGNS, 1495–1503

H1: Gonzalo de Córdoba

We have chosen to show 'The Great Captain' wearing a distinctive style of fluted armour called today 'Maximilian' (though there is no evidence that the Emperor was responsible for its introduction). Its elegant rounded ridges probably evolved from the raised lines of German 'Gothic' armour; it was widely copied, but involved more finishing work and therefore greater expense. It went out of fashion in Italy by *c*. 1520, but remained popular in Germany. His out-of-battle headgear is one of many variations of contemporary felt caps; some commentators identify the red colour as emblematic of battlefield commanders, but it was not exclusive to them.

H2: Castilian pikeman

Pikemen were the heart of the new infantry formations developed by Córdoba; numbering 200 of each 500-man *compania*, they could provide cover for the 200 sword-and-buckler men during the advance, and for the 100 arquebusiers after these had fired into the opposing ranks and withdrawn to reload. The ashwood pike ranged in length from 10ft up to 25ft, though 16–18ft was the usual upper limit, with an iron or steel spearhead attached with langets. Pikemen tended to wear more extensive plate protection against the thrusts of like-armed opponents, in this case a Spanish-style late 15th-century composite armour. The *cabaceta* and *bevor* are characteristic, as is the partial lack of greaves; the breastplate might bear the crow's-foot mark identifying manufacture at Calayatud.

H3: Aragonese arquebusier

Alfonso V had first encountered the arquebus (Spanish, *espingarda*; nowadays the term for a shotgun) in use by René of Anjou's troops late in his 1442 siege of Naples. He procured them for his own soldiers to supplement the crossbowmen, but the Spanish do not seem to have used them en masse for the next 50 years. It was in about the 1470s that the matchlock – with a jawed lever device to hold a burning slowmatch – was developed, opening up tactical possibilities for fairly reliable, coordinated use. Paintings from the first decade of the 16th century already show soldiers, including arquebusiers, wearing clothing combining doublets and hose in hues of orange, red, blue, green and yellow. Influenced by the multicoloured dress of Swiss and Germans serving the Empire, ever more flamboyant military fashions would become widespread across Europe by about 1515.

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OPPOSITE Detail of a late 14th-century *retablo* altarpiece depicting Enrique II of Trastámara, King of Castile (r. 1366/69–79) and his son Juan I (r. 1379–90). The conflicting dates of Enrique's accession stem from his invasion of Castile with French help, and coronation at Burgos, in 1366; his legitimate younger half-brother Pedro I continued to contest this, with English help, and Enrique was only confirmed on the throne after he killed Pedro three years later. His appearance follows French styles of the middle decades of the 14th century: a tight *jupon* probably worn over a plate cuirass, over either a ringmail *haubergeon* or a padded *aketon* with a mail skirt, and plate limb armour. The slinging of the sword from a baldric is an old-fashioned Iberian practice. Note that both figures are depicted as being fair-haired. (Original in Prado Museum; photo author's collection)

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